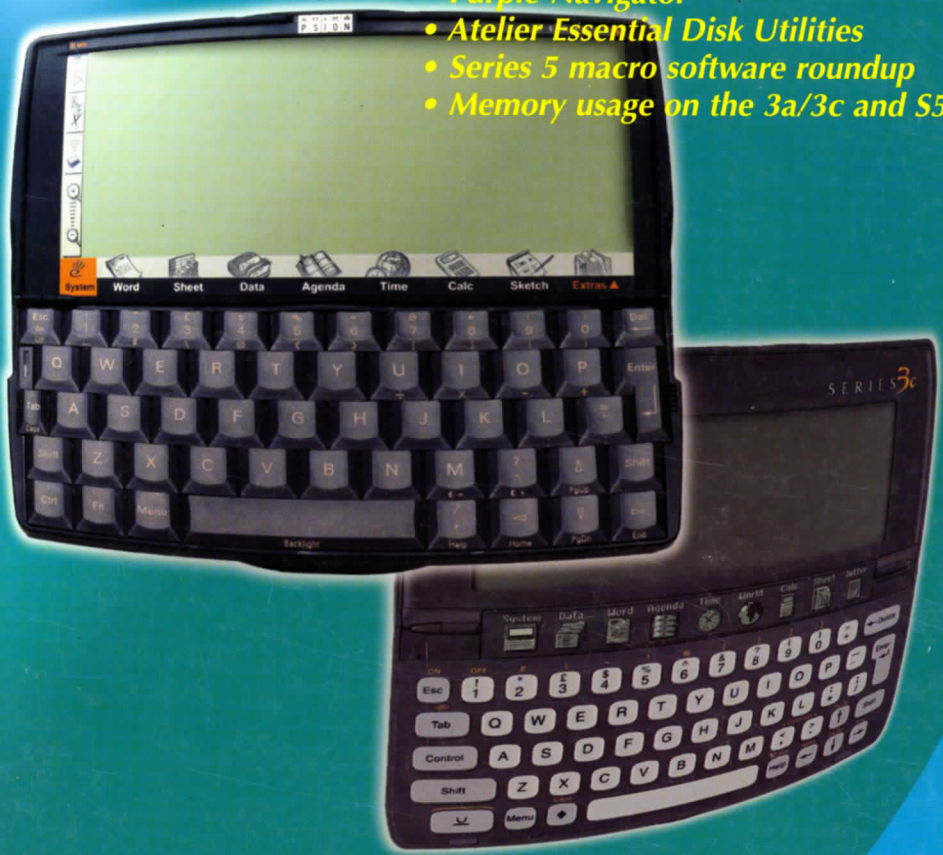
Palmtop

The journal for today's Psion user

Issue 18 Bimonthly

Delve inside...

- Purple Navigator
- Atelier Essential Disk Utilities
- Series 5 macro software roundup
- Memory usage on the 3a/3c and S5



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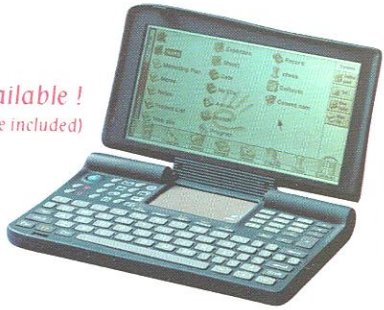

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The journal for today's Psion user

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Submissions

Any contributions of material published within the pages of *PALMTOP* (excluding 'On The Net') will earn the author a minimum of one free issue added to their subscription. If you wish to write feature articles for the magazine then please contact the editor to discuss your ideas.

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(Volume 3, issue 6)

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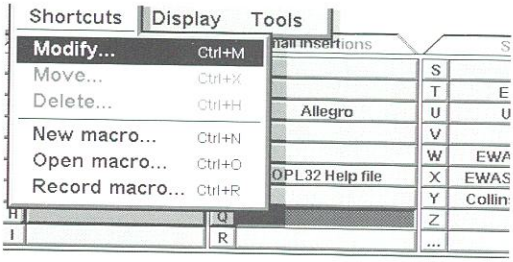

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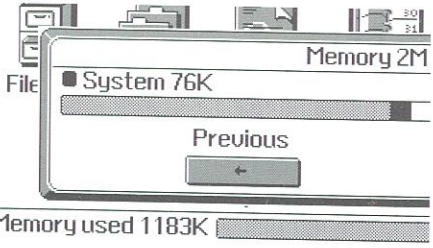

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Editorial

As a break from the usual, I'll use this issue's editorial as a chance to discuss where *Palmtop* magazine is going over the coming months.

The past year has seen enormous growth for us, with the print run for each issue now coming into five figures, and magazines being distributed to 77 countries around the globe—from Nigeria to New Zealand, Bangladesh to Brunei.

When each new issue of the magazine is shipped, the total distance travelled by all the magazines going to their destinations is now *millions* of miles—a far cry from the first edition of issue 1, which was printed on a domestic laser printer, then stapled, folded and guillotined by hand. Since that first batch of around 100 copies, issue 1 is now in its *fifth* printing, and all back issues of the magazine are still being purchased by many of our new subscribers, and by existing subscribers who just want to complete their collection.

As always in the history of *Palmtop*, we've been striving to improve the quality of our publication over the past months. In this issue you'll notice the first appearance of full colour *inside* the cover, with more colour pages planned from issue 19 onwards.

From the next issue we'll also be giving the magazine a major facelift with a

Psion users everywhere! Dark areas are countries with *Palmtop* subscribers...

slicker layout, new cover design, comprehensive review summaries with additional international summary information for our overseas readers, and new feature articles. We'll also be sending out regular questionnaires to ensure that we continue to provide the kind of articles and material our readers want.

We get lots of kind praise and enthusiasm from our readers, but please don't forget that we also like to hear from you if there's some aspect of the magazine that you would like us to change. The more critical feedback we get from our customers the better job we can make of refining the magazine with every issue.

Our new policy of including a free CD with every new subscription and resubscription has been an enormous success, and we will continue this offer for the foreseeable future. The CD is being updated and re-pressed approximately every two months now, and some readers have expressed an interest in receiving *every* copy of the CD, rather than just one at the start of their subscription. To this end we are now offering the *Palmtop CD-Plus* subscription, which adds six CD updates to the normal magazine subscription. You can find more details of how to upgrade to *Palmtop CD-Plus* on page 113.

We've purposefully avoided including a CD with every issue of the magazine (and increasing the subscription price accordingly) as 80% of the disk content remains unchanged from one CD to the next, and most readers don't feel the need to keep up to date with new software on such a regular basis. Also, a proportion of our readers still don't have easy access to a desktop computer, and for them the CD is less useful.

Another development in recent months has been the continuing development of our web site. The Internet is fast becoming an important source of new subscribers for us, and by the time you read this we should have full secure online ordering in place, so readers can subscribe or resubscribe directly over the Internet, with all the details of their transactions safely encrypted to prevent credit card fraud.

Finally, I'd like to thank you all for your support over the past months, and can assure you that we'll keep on working to make each issue of *Palmtop* just that little bit better than the last...

Steve Clack - June 1998

Palmtop is...

Steve Clack - Publishing Editor

Pete Sipple - Contributing Editor

Steve Litchfield - Contributing Editor

Leigh Edwards - Technical Consultant

Rosemary Rolfe - Distribution Manager

Thanks... to all the contributors whose names appear within the magazine. Thanks also to all those who have kindly supplied their products for evaluation.

Palmtop News

The latest hot gossip on what's happening in the Psion world

£50 off Series 3c/PsiWin

Psion are currently offering the Series 3c at £269.95, with the PsiWin connectivity software bundled for an additional £29.95 instead of £79.95, a saving of £50. This offer is available from all UK Psion stockists (except Boots) while stocks last. (All prices include VAT).

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International PsiWin

French, German and Dutch versions of PsiWin 2.1 are now available for download from Psion's web site, with further international versions to follow during the coming weeks.

www.psion.com

Yet more Message Suite enhancements...

Another Message Suite update should be available by the time you read this. The main improvement is the long-awaited support for binary attachments, allowing transfer of files across the Internet.

Multiple remote mailboxes are also supported by the new version, making it possible to check several different mail accounts without having to alter all the email settings each time.

www.psion.com

Printer driver updates

A number of new printer drivers for the Series 5 are expected to be available by the time you read this, including a new Canon Bubblejet BJ driver with support for Prestige and Courier, and a Bubblejet LQ mode. A number of existing drivers have also been upgraded and minor bugs removed. Upgrades include new fonts and improvements to page positioning and print speed.

www.psion.com

New SDK update

Psion have just released version 1.1 of their OPL/32 Software Development Kit (SDK) on EPOC World.

Although there are few radical improvements, the kit now includes the *MakeSIS* utility which will help commercial and shareware authors to distribute their software in SIS form, which is much easier for users to install than placing files manually.

The new kit also includes a WINS version of Message Suite and command line OPL/32 translator utilities.

Psion gets Chinese OS

Psion now have the first Chinese operating system for palmtops. Called McChinese, the OS is targeted at mobile users who need Mandarin support. It offers users a familiar onscreen environment with Chinese settings and commands and runs on the Series 3a, 3c and Series 5.

McChinese supports both simplified Chinese (GB internal coding) and traditional Chinese (Big5). The program lets users input data using either phonetics or English.

Using the phonetics input method, the user can choose from either Beijing, Changjei (Taiwanese input method) or Canton Phonetics. Once the phonetics for a phrase are keyed in, several combinations of Chinese characters will be available for the user to select. With the English input method, the program converts English text to its Chinese equivalent. McChinese also supports both English and Mandarin text in one document.

McChinese comprises system software and a suite of applications which resides over EPOC. The program has scalable Chinese fonts and supports printing of Chinese characters. McChinese's appli-

cation suite includes a database, word processing and a Chinese dictionary.

McChinese was developed by Hong Kong based DVM Consultants, a software consultancy house. Two versions of the software are available: McChinese 16, which works on the Series 3 range and McChinese 32 which works on the Series 5.

McChinese 16 retails at US$100 and McChinese 32 for the Series 5 at US$195. Users can purchase McChinese directly from *www.hkstar.com/~dvm* or from Onflo Computer Co. Ltd, Psion's distributor in Hong Kong.

Anthony Garvey (UK): 0171 258 7249
Lim Ai Ling (Asia): +65 438 3200

Novell extends GroupWise to Series 5

GroupWise scheduling and email is now available for the Series 5.

Novell GroupWise enables Psion's Messaging Suite (including e-mail, web browser and send/receive fax software) to deliver email features such as remote inbox control to selectively download messages. Users can choose to retrieve all or selected messages from a POP3 server and individual messages can be prioritised by either size or urgency, making it possible to only access pertinent information and effectively limit online expenses.

www.novell.com

More Series 5 accolades

Despite increasing competition in the palmtop computer world, the Series 5 continues to receive critical acclaim from various sources. The most recent awards are from Personal Computer World and PC Plus magazines:

"It [Psion Series 5] is the best piece of design we have ever seen on a computer. From the futuristic pen to the notebook-like keyboard, every part of the machine has benefited from the utmost care and attention to detail."

[Personal Computer World - Best Handheld Computer, PCW Awards 1998]

"While other players entered the handheld computing arena throughout the year, the Series 5 remains at the top of the tree in terms of both functionality and sheer usability, and is a deserving winner."

[PC Plus - Best Mobile Product award]

Australian Psion User Group go online

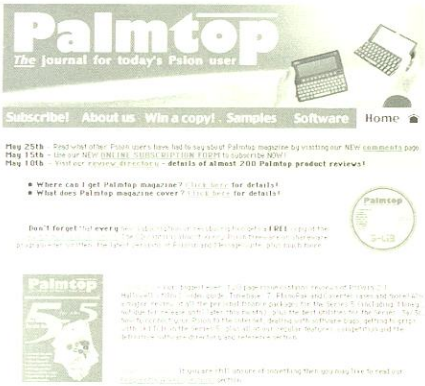
The Australian Psion User Group (see issue 7) now have a joint web site with 'Total Data Capture', the Australian Psion dealer.

www.totaldc.com.au/toc.htm

Palmtop web site expanding...

The *Palmtop* magazine web site has been extensively enhanced and updated over the past few weeks, with the addition of several new pages and topics. More major additions are planned for the summer months, so be sure to visit our site regularly for updates.

www.palmtop.co.uk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For any readers wishing to get more regular updates to the CD (rather than one per subscription), we are now offering a subscription upgrade to 'Palmtop CD-Plus'. This adds six copies of the CD-ROM to your regular magazine subscription, with the CDs being updated *approximately* every two months. Please note that the CDs are *not* produced in synchronisation with the magazine, and will be shipped separately.

Single copies of the CD-ROM can also be purchased from the 3Lib Shareware Library, see page 113.

Please see page 113 for further details, or visit our web site.

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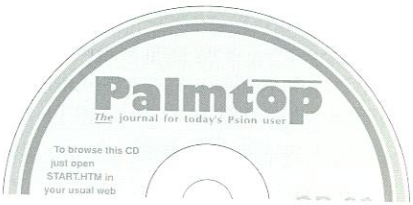
To browse this CD just open START.HTM in your usual web browser. See your latest copy of Palmtop for more detailed instructions
CD 02
3-LiB

Shareware Shorts

Steve Litchfield takes a look at the latest additions to the world of Psion shareware...



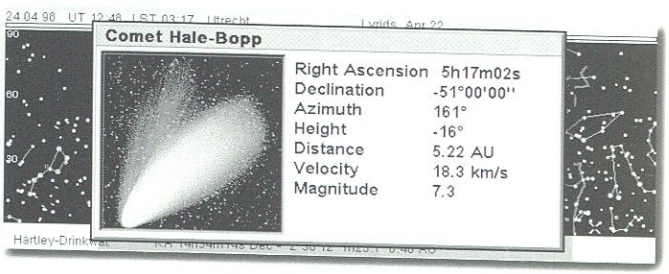
Shareware is synonymous with evolving programs and the inclusion of user-requested features, and this issue sees major updates to several well-known titles.

Series 5

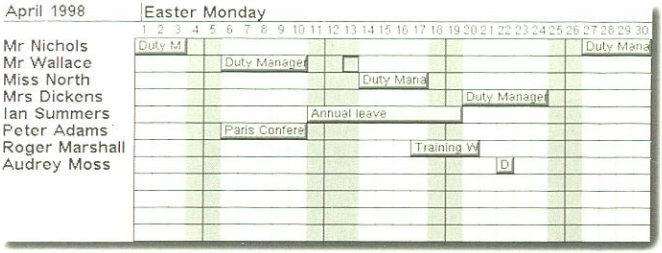
MbmView v2.10, by **Lieuwe de Vries**, now imports GIF, JPG and BMP format graphics as well as showing thumbnails of files in any particular folder. Once loaded, each picture can be viewed in 2, 4 or 16 colours, scrolled around and saved in MBM or SKETCH formats.

Russ Spooner (at Palmscape) has updated his web page editor and renamed it at the same time. *HTMLEdit98* requires a basic knowledge of HTML (HyperText Markup Language), but once mastered allows you to compose quite complex web pages while on the move. Of course, you'll usually need an FTP program to upload your creations, and one for the Psion is apparently in development.

The people behind the Procyon project (a complete astronomy suite running on the Psion) have now started issuing versions for the Series 5 and compati-



One of the many cosmic objects in *Procyon X*



Laying out staff commitments with *Facilities Manager*

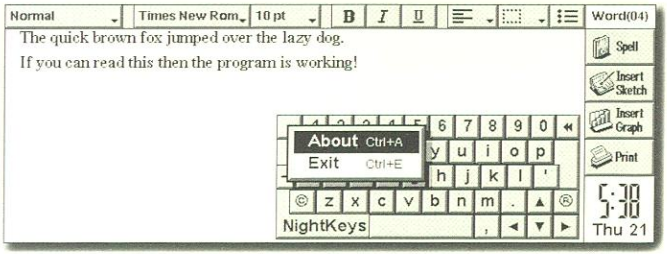
bles. Look out for *Procyon X*, featuring all the usual planet and star charts. Many objects in its database not only have text and numerical data but also associated pictures.

One of my favourite Series 3 applications has now been ported to the '5'. **Gary Bainbridge**'s *Facilities Manager* allows you to manage any kind of resource, e.g. an office complex, sports centre, employee pool, tool hire collection and so on. Each resource is graphically portrayed against a zoomable calendar to give you maximum control.

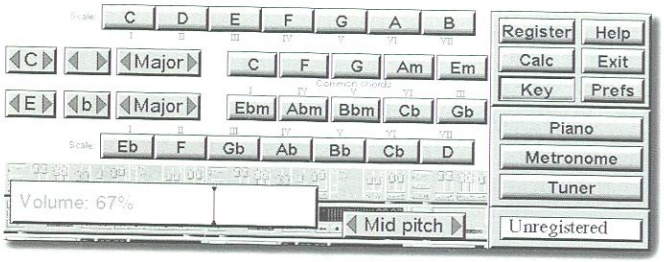
Mat Ripley's *Photo5* continues to evolve and is worth keeping tabs on. It attempts to be the 'PaintShop Pro' of the 32-bit Psion world with full 16-colour painting and a host of special effects and plug-ins. Mat is one of Palmscape's most active authors and we plan to include a full review of *Photo5* in the near future. Another author in the same programming house, **Simon Berridge**, has updated his *5Time* task, time and client manager to v2.17 and it now includes import/export functions and better printing support.

If you're still at school or college, or if you work in engineering, you'll love **Jamie Shotton**'s new version of *Grapher*, the all-purpose graph plotting tool. It now handles inequalities (e.g. all points y where y<(sin(x)/x)) with shaded areas, and supports zooming and a marvellously comprehensive help system.

Eeek! Who turned the lights out? Don't worry, you can still use your Series 5 even in total darkness, thanks to **Thomas Ross**'s *NightKeys*. An on-screen QWERTY keyboard allows typing using just the touch-screen (and backlight)



***NightKeys*—tapping out messages without the Series 5's keyboard**



Piano's extensive key and chord charts

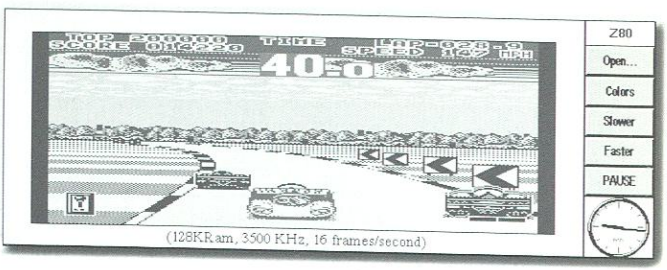
alone. A system of shifts also allows symbols and uppercase letters to be entered, and the keyboard graphic can be positioned anywhere on the screen.

On the subject of keys, the ebony and ivory kind can be also be summoned up at will with my own *Piano* v2.5. This application contains not only a fully playable keyboard but a metronome, comprehensive key and chord charts and an instrument tuner. Another program which is set to evolve much further, I'm looking into adding in tune-recording and MIDI compatibility.

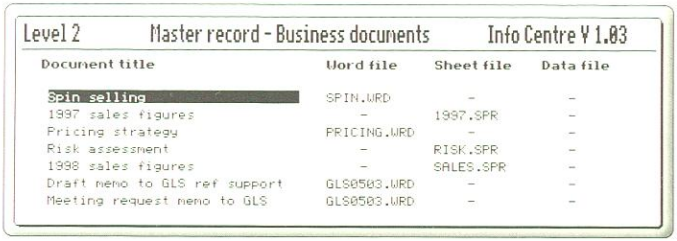
Elsewhere in this issue you'll read our review of Purple Software's Navigator. One of the few deficiencies we found was the inability to view battery status or to change the link settings once Navigator had been told to 'capture' the 'System' keypress. **Mark Riley** has stepped quickly into the breach with an add-on utility, *PNPlus*, which adds both the missing functions.

The 'JB' series of utilities is finally making it onto EPOC/32, with **John Boyce**'s *JB5Utils*. This is a 'shell' around utility modules to do file finding using different categories: by type, content or size. Or by searching out temporary, over-large or duplicate files that you may want to consider for deletion.

Games fans will be wondering what's in store for them this issue. Palmtop BV have massively updated their Z80 Spectrum emulator, which now handles even the large 128K games. Relive your youth with the thousands of Spectrum games available from the Internet! The emulated games play as well (or as badly) as the originals, though they can never compete directly with the graph-



***Le Mans* for the 128K Spectrum, running on a Series 5**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Organising your business with *Info Centre*

ical splendour of many modern purpose-built Series 5 games.

JS Greenwood's *Klax5* and *Columns* are both arcade puzzlers in the Tetris mould. *Klax5* involves catching falling tiles and then rearranging them to form combinations in an on-screen grid, while *Columns* is much closer to Tetris.

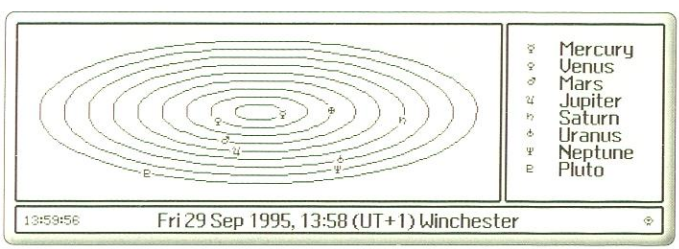
Series 3a/3c

One thing many people have asked for is a Series 3 version of my freeware *Trivia* application, and I've done my best to oblige. Although several of the more graphical entries from the Series 5 version failed to survive the journey, the bulk of the database has now been converted for Series 3 DATA and is now available as S3TRIV19.ZIP.

Chris Nicholson is another author who hasn't abandoned Series 3 users. The concept behind his *Info Centre* is that all files can be accessed from one area. Essentially it's a database where each record can have a WORD, SHEET, DATA or another *Info Centre* file attached to it. You'll have to try it out to see the benefits, but that's the beauty of shareware.

Series 3 astronomy buffs who envied their Series 5 cousins with Procyon can now relax. **David Rushall**'s *Solun* has been updated and is now at v4.0—looking very impressive. Features include planetarium and star atlas displays, globe views, solar system displays and almanac reports, including lunar month, rise and set times and eclipses. It even runs on the tiny Siena (if you've got the disk space).

As always, the best place to find latest versions of the software mentioned here is on the relevant author's web pages, or on the latest *Palmtop* CD.



Series 3 Voyager: *Solun*

Readers' Letters

Contribute and WIN PRIZES!

The Prize Letter in each issue wins the author a FREE software package or other Psion goodies from our special collection. Prizes are valued at up to £70 each!

The future of Psion

In your (rather short) comment on 'the CE threat?' in issue 17, you state that "Win CE manufacturers seem to keep missing the point about handheld computers needing to be truly pocketable". I disagree. Let me give some thoughts based on the idea that both CE manufacturers and you are missing the point, because it lies exactly in the opposite direction. What we badly miss right now are not smaller, but *bigger* CE or EPOC/32 computers! Okay, lots of people will stand by their habit of carrying an 'electronic agenda' in their pocket, but tens of thousands of other people—like myself—carry a briefcase or something like it, and what they are longing for is a light, sturdy, simple computer that gives them instant access to their data and a decent battery life. That is, a Series 5 with its nice keyboard, but just 20% bigger, and a better screen—or a Win CE machine.

This is where the big market of tomorrow lies, because people are fed up with fragile six-pound laptops that take ninety seconds to boot up and leave their owner perpetually anxious because of weak batteries.

You analysed the situation correctly when you considered the coming of the '5' like the beginning of a new era and a new challenge for Psion. You are right again when you underline the danger of CE competition in your last editorial, even if part of the glitz about CE is exaggerated and unfair to Psion (I compared both and agree that EPOC32 still fares better). There is just that reassuring 'Windows' factor—it is a potential killer. Psion shareholders are beginning to feel cold winds.

The decisions ahead are not simple. You suggest that Psion should bring out its own colour screen very soon. That would probably help to keep part of the six to twelve month head-start that Psion gained when it rolled out the '5' last summer. But the CE machines are coming in numbers now, and the future is not clear. I am personally convinced that if it isn't very careful, Psion will quite soon be marginalised in the 'electronic agenda' sector (where competition is already tough) and possibly reduced to insignificance.

As a European (even if Switzerland stubbornly snubs EU), I would be sad to see an interesting English company with good ideas and nice products being pushed aside by the *sooo* dull Microsoft gang.

Jean-Claude Péclet
Prilly, Switzerland

No abuse here...

I was interested to see the reader's letter in issue 16 from someone who was being abused for using his Psion in public places.

I live just a twenty minute walk from work so when the weather is nice and I don't need the car I like to walk. This gives me some eighty minutes a day of almost uninterrupted time to myself. For many years I used that time for reading, then I got my first Psion, a Series 3, and soon developed the knack of typing with my thumbs while walking.

Now I've progressed to a Series 5 with the Message Suite I find it is a perfect time for writing email. I do get stares from passers by and often get told "you'll walk under a bus if you're not careful". But after lots of years on the same route I've never yet had an incident.

Only once have I felt intimidated, and that was in a pub when I was on a lone walking holiday and using the, then brand new, Series 5 to keep a journal.

Perhaps I am thick skinned, because I carry my Psion with me everywhere and often even wear trousers with a purpose-made Psion pocket on the right leg. If my wife is with me I have to be much more discreet about whipping it out in public—she disapproves strongly. Can anyone suggest a cure for a spouse who feels she takes second place to my beloved Psion?

Alex Wallis
Camborne, Cornwall

Psion and Pocket Book Machines in Schools

As lots of these Acorn-badged Psion machines are used in schools in the UK, I'm sure some teachers have developed their own example spreadsheets, databases, and possibly even complete applications for school use.

Several appropriate applications have been produced by public domain and shareware programmers, and are avail-

able via the main third-party Psion web sites (e.g. *3-Lib* or *5 Alive*). These include resources such as Periodic Table data for Chemistry and Physics, graph plotting applications (as well as the one built into the Pocket Book II), and statistical analysis software. Perhaps some teachers have even produced complete class exercises built around the use of the Pocket Book to teach spreadsheet development, database use, etc? There is also *Nstore*, a commercial application to make a teacher's life easier when it comes to National Curriculum record keeping and reporting.

If anyone has developed anything specifically for school use (either themselves or as part of a classroom exercise) I'd be very happy to add it to the educational resource I'm setting up to support teachers in their use of Psion machines (both the 3a/3c and the Series 5 ranges).

Either email me at *jwoodthorpe@ndirect.co.uk* or write to me at 31 Weston Close, Dunchurch, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV22 6QD, and I'll start a collection of suitable software, hints and tips, etc., to be made available via the ArmLink Web site:

www.armlink.ndirect.co.uk/

Ideally, I'd like to make the files themselves available, along with some instructions as to how they have been used, so please contact me first rather than sending a random selection of undocumented files!

I'll be reporting on developments in the use of these machines in education in a future issue of *Palmtop*.

John Woodthorpe
Pocket Book and Series 5 Column Editor, Archive Magazine

Help? Help!

Pete Sipple's article 'Rainy Days and Mondays' has prompted me to write and use similar dialogue to that normally reserved for the BBC TV programme 'Points of View'. I hope the chaps at Psion get to read the following:

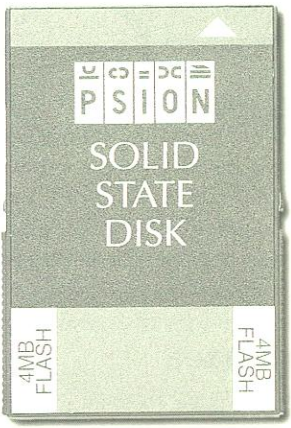
"I'm so, so, so sorry for being an absolute plonker and pestering your Technical Department with trivial questions relating to my Series5—questions which I could have answered myself if I had used my own initiative and utilised the built in 'Help' function. (as advised so politely by one of your staff)."

Secondly may I offer this same advice to all my fellow readers: the Series 5 Help menu is far more comprehensive than you may think and offers an easy to understand idiot's guide to every application. Unlike the User Guide, it's with you wherever you go.

So use it and don't waste the time of the boffins at Psion unless it's vital—you'll also save on your phone bill.

Graeme Spencer
Worsley, Manchester

WIN a FREE 4MB flash SSD or 32MB CompactFlash!!



Whether you're a Series 3a/3c or Series 5 user, you can expand the capacity of your Psion computer by winning either a Psion 4MB flash SSD or a Simple Technology 32MB CompactFlash—you choose which prize you want.

Just answer the three questions (below) relating to this issue of *Palmtop* magazine, and send your answers on a postcard to the address given on page 1.

We can only accept entries by postcard, and all postcards must be clearly labelled COMPETITION 17. Any entries received by means other than postcard will be discarded.

All entries must reach us by 15th July 1998, and the winner will be notified on the following day.

Question 1: What computer can now be emulated with a Series 5?

Question 2: *Palmtop* now has subscribers in how many countries?

Question 3: What Psion software is needed for 3a/3c Internet access?

A Closer Look...

...at some of the newest and most interesting products available for your Series 3a/3c, or Series 5/Geofox One

Navigator

Series 5

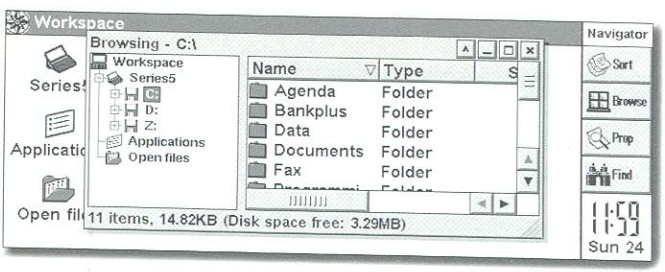
Purple Software's *Navigator* is three products in one. It manages files, it handles zip compression, and it allows you to organise how you access files on your Series 5 or Geofox.

Supplied on floppy disk, it uses *EPOC Install* for easy setup. When you first run Navigator, you are presented with the main Workspace and Browser screen.

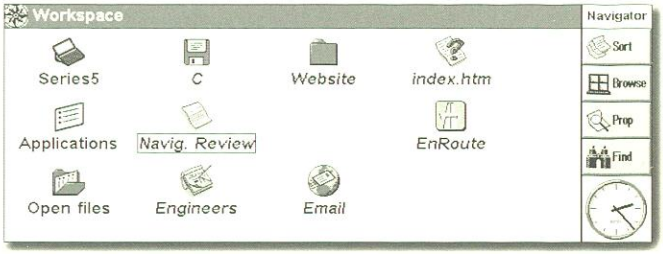
Workspace

The 'Workspace' screen is the key to Navigator. In your Workspace you have one-tap access to your Psion drives and installed applications, as well as any open files. This makes file access both fast and convenient.

Windows 95 users who have customised their main screen will recognise this 'desktop' concept. To add items to your workspace it's a case of finding the application or document that you want (via the Browser screen), and



The opening screen— 'Browsing' your Psion



The Workspace—containing a shortcut to this review.

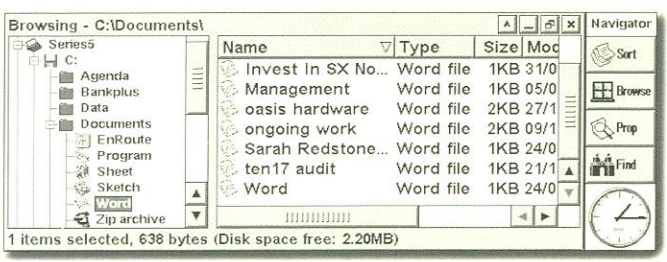
dragging it onto your Workspace. This creates a shortcut, which you can position wherever you like on screen. You can also create a hotkey for your shortcut, using any combination of keys including <Fn>, <Shift> and <Ctrl>. As well as documents, your Workspace can also have shortcuts to your applications.

Browsers

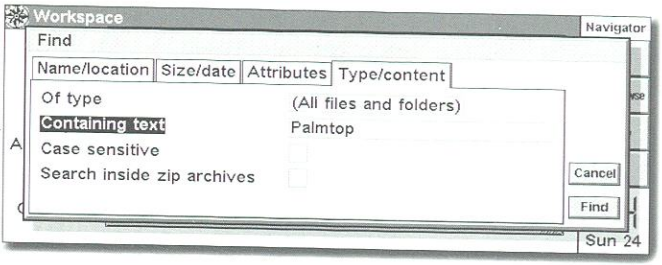
From the Browser, you have access to your Psion drives, including the Z drive (the internal ROM), as well as your installed applications and a list of open files. Users of Windows 95 will feel instantly at home, as Navigator is similar both in operation and appearance. In the Browser's top right hand corner there are four small boxes (see opposite) which allow you to move up a level, minimise or maximise the display as well as close the current screen.

The Browser acts in a similar way to most other file managers, in that you can view file date, size and attributes, as well as sort your list of files and change from a list to an icon view. For the first time, you can now use drag-and-drop to copy files from one directory to another.

One useful feature is 'Filter by application'. My 'Documents' folder contains several different types of file, including some WORD documents, Sketches, Zip files and some spreadsheets. From the screenshot below you will see that I have been able to sub-group various



Browsing your documents...



Searching all files for a keyword

types of file found in my Documents folder. For users with lots of files on their machine the facility to group file types in this way can be very beneficial, especially when copying or backing-up data.

Drag and drop

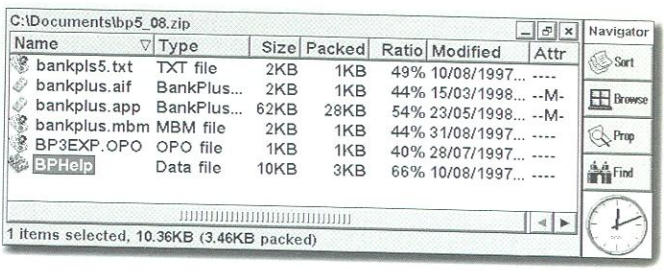
When I first used a Series 5, like many other users I was surprised to find that the file management system didn't use drag-and-drop. I assumed that it was perhaps just not possible, but that is evidently not the case. Purple's implementation of this facility is very impressive: you can move (or copy) files within a single Browser, or open multiple Browsers and drag between them. Navigator is intelligent enough to know whether you want to move or copy files depending on the target location, but by pressing the <Ctrl> or <Shift> keys you can force a copy or move respectively. Cut and paste functions are also fully implemented.

Finding files

Here Purple have added another powerful feature to Navigator. By bringing up the 'Find' option, you can select whether to find a file by name (including wildcards), search by date and size, files with certain attributes, i.e. 'Read-only', or most usefully, for files containing keywords. You can even search *within* ZIP archive files.

ZIPping

In previous issues of *Palmtop*, we have looked at the principle of 'ZIPping' files



The contents of a ZIP file

into one compressed archive. Until Navigator's appearance, zipping was only possible with Serge Shestopalov's excellent shareware program, *S5Zip*. Navigator handles the process of 'zipping' in a similar way. You can open an existing ZIP file (for example, software that you have downloaded onto your Series 5 from the Internet), or you can create a compressed ZIP of documents that you don't use very often, in an effort to conserve storage space on your '5'. The one advantage of Navigator over S5Zip is that you can drag-and-drop both to and from a ZIP file. Zipping generally works very quickly and has once again been well implemented.

Summary

Navigator grew on me. I've always been happy with my Psion's file manager, and so using up 330K of storage space for another one, albeit with some bells and whistles, seemed like a waste of space. When reviewing a product for *Palmtop*, I take time to find out what each product can *really* do, and the more I used Navigator's Browsers the more I liked them. Whilst drag-and-drop on any machine is not essential, it *is* a useful, tool—one that should have been standard with the Series 5 from day one. Being able to tap on an application from the Workspace or a Browser was another of those little touches that makes the product worthwhile, as you can speed up access to your commonly used files and programs.

Navigator is also very customisable, even down to the use of the four toolbar buttons. Also, if you find that you prefer Navigator's feel over Psion's own system screen, then there is an option in 'Preferences' which makes Navigator accessible from your orange <System> button. Although you might worry about losing access to the battery status and link settings of the original system screen, it's easy to set up a shortcut to it. Just drag-and-drop 'System' onto your Workspace from the 'Open files' Browser.

Some may consider the manual to be a little too basic, and it could certainly benefit from at least *one* screenshot, but the product is so easy to use that you can operate it without referring to the book, or even to the extensive online help.

Fast, flashy and functional. It's hard to fault.

Pete Sipple

Navigator

From: All major Psion dealers

Availability: now

Contact: 0171 3877777 (Purple)

Runs on: Series 5/Geofox One

Supplied on: floppy disk

Price: £29.95 inc. VAT

Quality:

Value:

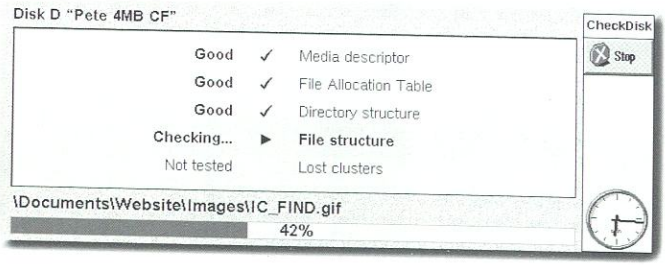
Essential Disk Utilities

Series 5

With computers getting more and more complex, there's more to go wrong. Looking along the shelves of PC software suppliers you'll see more and more utilities to fix your computer's problems and to maintain your machine's health. Whilst I've had a host of disk-related problems with PCs over the years, I've never had a serious problem with the data on any of my Psion machines. For this reason I was a little surprised to find *Essential Disk Utilities*, from Atelier, who are best known as the creators of PsiMac and MacConnect. Their package contains four utilities:

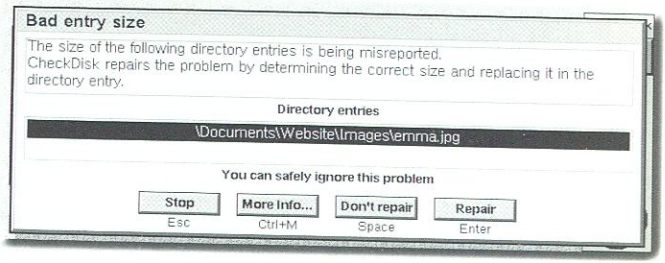
CheckDisk

Over the years, a little PC program, Norton Disk Doctor, has got me out of a lot of scrapes: dead floppy disks, faults on hard disks and data loss. CheckDisk for the Series 5 does a similar job, looking for faults in the media descriptor, the file allocation table, the directory and file structures, and for lost clusters. A scan of my 'C:' drive took just over under two minutes and flagged up two errors, firstly that one of my picture files wasn't of the correct size, and secondly that I had two conflicting filenames. These problems weren't causing me any trouble, but I chose to let CheckDisk fix them anyway. For ultimate peace of mind CheckDisk is a useful addition to your software armoury, and it's the first thing to try if you appear to be having disk-related problems.



Checking a CompactFlash

"We have a problem..."


Bad entry size
The size of the following directory entries is being misreported.
CheckDisk repairs the problem by determining the correct size and replacing it in the directory entry.
Directory entries
\Documents\Website\Images\emma.jpg
You can safely ignore this problem
Stop Esc
More Info... Ctrl+M
Don't repair Space
Repair Enter

Optimise

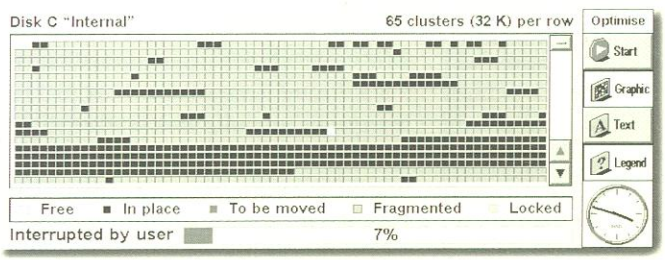
Fragmentation is something that affects the disk drives on a computer. When your computer saves a file, it saves it in the first available 'cluster' of free space. The more you use your computer, the more likely it is that your files will end up scattered around various parts of the computer's disk. A single file may use many clusters, and they can be scattered widely across the drive.

If your disk has its files scattered all over the place in this way, it can affect how quickly your computer accesses the information. DOS and Windows 3.x/95 come with a built-in defragmenter program, and this is the first time that I have seen such a program for the Series 5. As the Psion stores its data in solid state form rather than on a spinning magnetic disk, fragmentation is unlikely to have a significant impact on a Series 5's performance.

Running the program presents a graphical map of your disk's surface, or if you prefer, you can view a more detailed statistical summary.

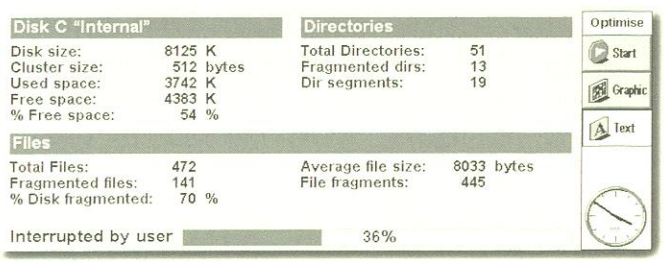
Once started, the optimisation cycle consists of checking, ordering and defragmenting the disk, and then preparing and ordering the FAT (File Allocation Tables, the mechanism EPOC/32's filing system uses to handle the allocation of storage space).

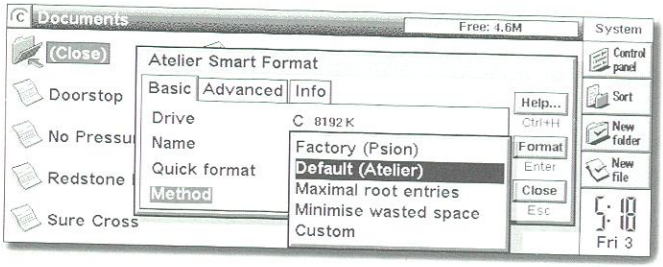
While in this mode it's impossible to do anything else on the drive you're currently defragmenting, so you may need to suspend working on the machine while it sorts your files out. The whole process pauses if your machine



My fragmented 'C:' drive

The text view





Smart Format options...

goes into auto switch-off mode, so it's worth using a mains adaptor to save on batteries.

My 8MB Series 5 was just under half-full and was 70% fragmented, and the process took just over 32 minutes. There was no noticeable performance improvement after the defragmentation was complete, even when benchmarking file opening times and the processing of large amounts of data. The process was also repeated on a 32MB CF disk, again with no noticeable effects. It's certainly possible that performance improvements may become noticeable as CF disk sizes increase over the coming months, but for practical purposes we found no visible benefit from using Optimise.

SmartFormat

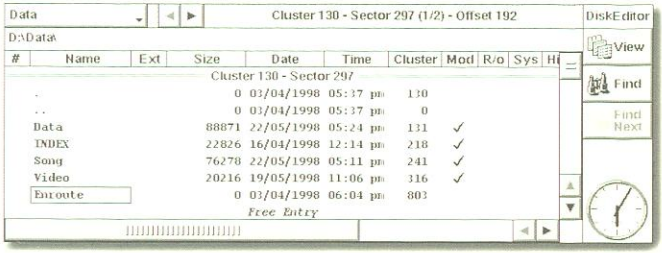
This program has just one job, to format your internal or CompactFlash drives. Much like Psion's built-in 'Format' command, but with some potentially useful options that can improve the storage efficiency of your media, depending upon the way you use your machine.

It does this primarily by adjusting cluster sizes: every file on your machine will take up at least one cluster, no matter how small the file, so even a 1K file will fill a 64K cluster. By creating smaller clusters SmartFormat can significantly increase the available storage space on small (4-10MB) CF disks. Again, with our large 32MB drive there would have been no benefit.

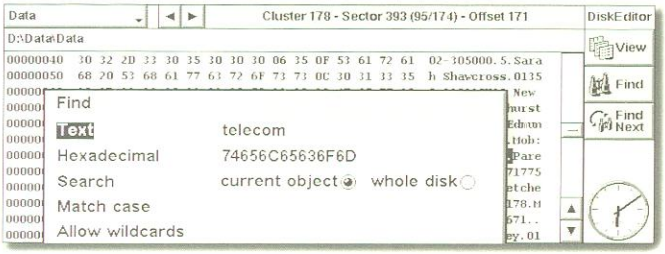
SmartFormat can be configured for a variety of advanced formatting methods, depending upon the type of data you are storing. The manual outlines the different options, though far too briefly. One useful choice when formatting with this software is to use the 'Maximal root directories' option, which allows up to 512 files and folders inside the top level directory, rather than the usual Psion-imposed limit of 64.

Disk Editor

This one is for the *serious* user. I've used a disk tool like this on the PC a couple of times. It lets you examine and change the contents of each byte on your disk. If you *really* know what you're doing it's possible to recover damaged data by


Data
Cluster 130 - Sector 297 (1/2) - Offset 192
DiskEditor
D:\Data\
View
Name Ext Size Date Time Cluster Mod R/o Sys Hi
Find
Cluster 130 - Sector 297
Find Next
0 03/04/1998 05:37 pm 130
.. 0 03/04/1998 05:37 pm 0
Data 88871 22/05/1998 05:24 pm 131 ✓
INDEX 22826 16/04/1998 12:14 pm 218 ✓
Song 76278 22/05/1998 05:11 pm 241 ✓
Video 20216 19/05/1998 11:06 pm 316 ✓
Enroute 0 03/04/1998 06:04 pm 803
Free Entry

The root directory view



Searching byte-by-byte

making changes to file headers, and you can also see how data is structured. If you want to check out your boot sector and FAT, and if you're competent enough to tell your ASCII from your hexadecimal, then this is definitely for you. You can search for data in ASCII or hex and tweak away. Most users should avoid using Disk Editor for fear of accidentally corrupting their data, even though the program works in 'read-only' mode by default.

Summary

Discounting that Optimise offers little tangible benefit and that Disk Editor is strictly for power users only, CheckDisk and SmartFormat alone may still be useful enough to make the package worthwhile for serious Psion users, particularly those with CF disks.

EDU comes with good on-line help and, according to the neat 'About' screen, is entirely developed using recycled bytes!

Pete Sipple

Essential Disk Utils.

From: All major Psion dealers

Availability: now

Contact: +33 144 650010

Runs on: Series 5/Geofox One

Supplied on: floppy disk

Price: £39.95 inc. VAT

Quality:

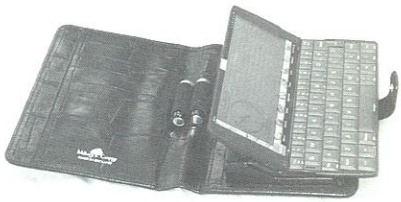
Value:

Mulberry case

Series 5

I've reviewed many carrying cases for *Palmtop*. All have been priced within the bounds of sanity—until now.

Widget's new 'flagship' case is certainly in the very top echelon in terms of quality, though no better than the Vega range (reviewed in this issue) or the new Covertecs as reviewed in the last issue. The filofax-style black leather 'folder' case opens to reveal a slot for papers on the left side, and a carefully shaped leather covered and tartan fabric lined 'box' arrangement on the right. This ingenious structure allows a Series 5 to be pushed, back end first, towards the spine of the case, which is then held in place along its front edge by a pair of leather features. This means that the Series 5 can be used *while in situ* in the case, without having to stick on Velcro patches to hold it in place. This innovative but simple concept lifts the design above all its Velcro-fixed rivals, earning it a full five star quality rating.



When closed, the machine remains reasonably firmly secured (though it can be dislodged if shaken around) until the case is closed and the press-stud clasp engaged.

The other main attribute of the case is a pair of elasticated loops in the spine to hold AA batteries or pens.

Manufactured exclusively for Widget Software by Mulberry, who make other quality leather goods, there's no doubt that this case is a desirable accessory. The textured black leather finish is reminiscent of crocodile skin, is faultlessly constructed, and sports the standard Mulberry logo of an embossed mulberry bush on the bottom right hand side of the exterior—very elegant.

In spite of the intelligent design and exemplary build quality, at a price of £185 including VAT this case is at least £100 too expensive by any reasonable standards. Of course it's possible to pay this amount (and more) for a 'designer' leather handbag, but from a purely practical standpoint, comparing it to other Psion cases on the market, there's nothing in its specification that warrants a price tag some *4-6 times* the normal for one of this type—apart from the Mulberry name.

If money were no object then the Widget Mulberry case would certainly be close to the top of my list of desirable cases. In reality, with so many excellent alternatives at around the £30-£40 mark, I wouldn't give it a second thought. If you have almost £200 burning a hole in your pocket or want to buy someone an extravagant gift then this may be for you. The rest of us would rather spend the money on something like a 32MB CF storage disk, four or five decent software packages, or a ten year supply of AA batteries.

Steve Clack

Mulberry case

From: Widget Software Ltd

Availability: now

Contact: 01438 815444

Price: £185 inc. VAT

Quality:

Value:

Belt case

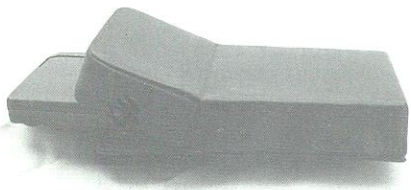
Series 3 / Series 5

Another offering from Widget Software, this semi-rigid black case comes with a detachable belt clasp that snaps securely into place. With a push-in quick release mechanism it's very quick to take the case off your belt without removing the belt loop too, or alternatively the Series 3/Series 5 can easily be withdrawn with the case still in place.

The squared-off lines make this fractionally bulkier than most other belt-mounting units, but help it to provide maximum protection. Although internal padding is limited to 1mm or so of foam under the nylon lining in the front and back, it still offers good resistance against bumps and knocks.

The case is opened by a press-stud clasp at the top, which when released enables the top 40% of the front to hinge downwards so the computer can be pulled out of the top. The interior is generously sized even for a Series 5, and it's a pleasure to be able to remove the computer without unnecessary tugging due to an overly tight fit—something many other belt cases suffer from.

This unit is ideal to keep inside a briefcase or rucksack, as its solid 'closed' construction will protect against damage from contact with other objects, an all-around level of protection that few other models provide.



The minimalist plain leather finish of this case will not be to everyone's taste, but in terms of practicality it's a good choice. If you want the option to carry your Psion around the waist and prize a good level of machine protection over fancy styling then this will fit the bill at a reasonable price.

Steve Clack

Belt case

From: Widget Software Ltd

Availability: now

Contact: 01438 815444

Price: £29.99 inc. VAT

Quality:

Value:

Mobile Communication case

Series 3 / Series 5 / Geofox One

At around 290 x 190 x 50mm in size, this most certainly isn't the height of portability. It feels more like carrying a sub-notebook computer around, but holds much more than just a palmtop computer—it's a whole telecommunications station!

This case will comfortably hold any palmtop in the Psion range, a mobile telephone, Psion Travel Modem (or any other compact portable modem), notepad, pens, batteries, business cards, credit cards, cables and telephone adaptors.

One side of the interior has a pair of generous slots to tuck in your notepad, cheque book, or a large sheaf of papers, plus a large zippered pocket, half a dozen credit card pockets and a business card window. The other side is simply a giant Velcro 'platform' on which you can attach a variety of items. The case comes complete with a full leather mobile telephone case, with a long Velcro strip on the back to hold it in place. This also has a simple belt loop if you wish to carry the phone by itself. There's no window to access the telephone's keypad while in the case, but it does have an aperture to connect to the data socket—so if using it for a modem connection it can simply be switched on and slipped back into its case for the

duration of the telecommunications session.

The package also comes with a zippered 'netting' pouch, trimmed with leather. Again fitted with a Velcro strip along its back, the pouch can be stuffed with a Travel Modem, cables, money—whatever will fit. The pouch looked a little flimsy at first, but after a few minutes of tugging on the seams I was convinced that it should be sufficiently durable in use, provided it's not used to store anything sharp. Also included is a bag containing four extra self-adhesive Velcro strips which can be attached to the back of your Psion, modem, or other accessories.

With careful positioning it's possible to arrange everything so that your palmtop computer can be used from within the case, complete with modem and telephone attached. The beauty of this case is that all the components can still be left connected when the case is closed, giving instant connectivity without the need to mess with cabling on each occasion.

The quality of the case is good throughout, with a sturdy zipper and leather carrying loop. Like the belt case the exterior is made from smooth, plain black leather, with no exterior features.

Overall, this is an awful lot of case for a reasonable price. If you have a lot of equipment to haul around then this keeps it all in one place, and caters for all Psion models. It is even big enough to carry a Geofox One and telephone at the same time.

Steve Clack

Mobile comms. case

From: Widget Software Ltd

Availability: now

Contact: 01438 815444

Price: £59.95 inc. VAT

Quality:

Value:

Vega cases

Series 3 / Series 5 / Siena

We carried out a review of Vega's range of Series 3a/3c cases and holsters back in issue 8. These were all beautifully crafted in thick 'saddle leather'—the Rolls Royces of Psion cases.

Since then, Vega, a UK-based company with a manufacturing plant in Italy, have extended the original range to incorporate models in both 'antique leather', and Du Pont's 'Cordura', a durable and attractive nylon-like fabric.

The antique leather is much softer and more supple than the almost 2mm thick saddle leather. All cases are available in both black and brown finishes, the saddle leather being a dark tan colour and the antique leather more of a mottled chocolate brown—both very handsome. The interior surfaces of all the leather cases are lined with a thin green velvet-like material, which further adds to the quality feel.

The stitching of the leather is uniformly heavy-duty and *accurate*, with no wavy seam lines as sometimes found on inferior cases.

The new Cordura range duplicates most of the models available in antique leather, but typically at around half the price. Interior pockets and loops on the Cordura models are still finished in leather, and the standard 'Vega holster' logo is embossed onto a leather patch stitched onto an outside corner of the case. This is a nice touch, and enhances the appearance even more.

The Cordura cases are in no way inferior to the leather ones—it's just an alternative finish. Personally, I prefer some of the Cordura models to their leather equivalents, but it's all a question of personal preferences.

All of the cases are available in either Series 3a/3c or Series 5 versions, and there are even models for SSDs, CompactFlash disks and Sienas. Here's a roundup of the models currently available:

Wallet

This model is available in saddle leather or antique leather. It's designed in the standard filofax-style arrangement—opening up to reveal a large pocket on one side to house the machine, with a pen loop down the centre and pockets for banknotes, credit cards, CFs, etc. along the other side. There's also a Siena version, which has no pen loop, and just the money pocket plus a pair of credit card slots.

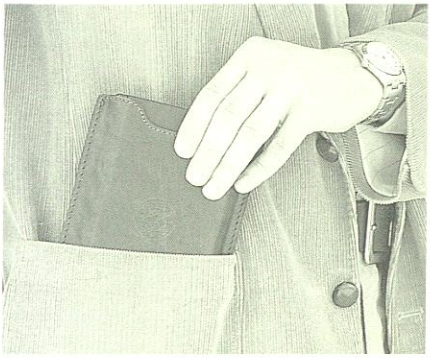
These cases all offer good protection, particularly in the super-thick saddle leather, and are ideal to keep in a briefcase or large handbag. They're too big for a jacket pocket, but can be carried around in the hand quite comfortably.

All 'wallet' cases are priced at £39.95.

The 'wallet' model in saddle leather

Pocket wallet

The only member of the Vega range that is actually pocketable, these 'slip' cases carry a Series 3, Series 5 or Siena—nothing else. Made from two pieces of leather stitched together around the edges, they're available only in saddle leather.



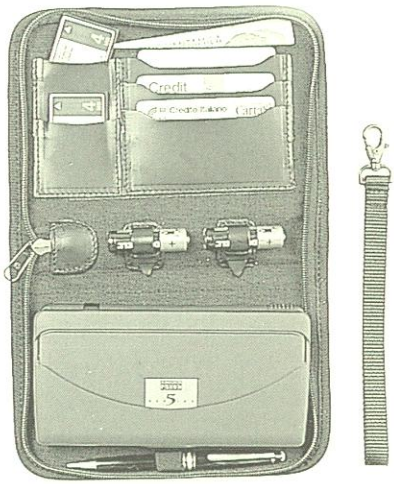
The pocketable 'pocket wallet'

Like any slip case this model gives enough protection to guard your Psion against scratches while inside a jacket pocket or bag, all at minimal cost. The pocket wallet cases retail at £19.95.

Zipper wallet

The 'zipper wallet' range actually includes a number of different sizes and styles, all as fully closable cases with a zipper along three sides and a removable wrist strap. They are available in antique leather or Cordura, and all allow the computer to be used while in position in the case.

The smallest member of the zippered family (around 200 x 140 x 30mm) is

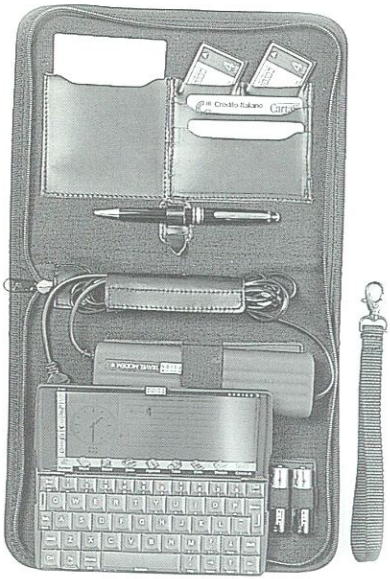


A small zipper wallet

large enough to hold the Psion computer on one side and banknotes, credit cards or business cards, and a few CF disks in the Series 5 model. There's also a pair of leather loops in the spine of the case to hold either a pen or a pair of AA batteries. The exterior has a lined and zippered pocket for carrying documents or small change.

As with many cases of this design, the computer is held in place by self-adhesive Velcro strips that must be fixed to the back of your machine. Like many users I'm reticent to stick these ugly things to my Psion—I *know* they're practical, but they tend to spoil the look of computer. You can obviously use your Psion from inside the case *without* attaching the Velcro strips, but be careful that it doesn't inadvertently slip out as you are opening the case.

Zipper wallet with PC card adaptor



Zipper wallet with Travel Modem

Two larger variants of the zippered case are also available. Both around 250 x 200 x 30mm in size, one has an elasticated slot for the Psion Travel Modem (or a slim mobile telephone), a Velcro-closed flap to keep connection cables tidy, a pair of extra battery holders and an additional notepad pocket.

The other is identical apart from a larger elasticated slot, designed to house Psion's PC Card Adaptor instead of the Travel Modem. Both of these cases are clearly for those who need to carry around a complete communications package. It's a pity that Vega don't offer a similarly sized 'general purpose'

version of the case, with simple pockets for carrying a notepad, generic modem, more documents, money, cheque book and so on.

Overall these are excellent cases, but apart from the smaller version are all for very specific uses. Prices vary from £32.95 for the smallest Cordura model up to £99.95 for the largest leather ones. £100 may seem expensive for a case, but the antique leather is of *superb* quality, and these are big cases containing a lot of leather. I would consider all the cases in the Vega range as good value for money, and they should last a lifetime.

Belt holster

Available in saddle leather or Cordura (with a Siena model in leather only). The leather model has a stud-fastened closure flap to hold the computer securely in place, and the option of securing to your belt using either a moulded plastic loop, or a pair of slots through which you pass the belt.

The Cordura version of these holsters is the most adaptable belt-mounting case currently on the market. In addition to the two belt mounting options you can also remove the top closure flap by releasing its Velcro fixture behind the case, and replace this with a cord strap. The strap gives faster access to the machine, and can even be left off completely if desired. All the options are of course freely interchangeable, which is what makes these holsters so good.

The leather holsters cost £39.95, and the multi-mode Cordura model is a bargain at £19.95.

Quick on the draw...

Shoulder holster

These are identical to the belt holster cases, but are attached to a harness that fits around your body. Although the straps are all nicely adjustable, a full harness such as this is still pretty uncomfortable, particularly when worn with light clothing. Ideal if you need to go mountaineering with your palmtop computer, but a little too much for the rest of us.

The complete kit costs £59.95 in leather and £29.95 in Cordura. Both belt and shoulder holsters are also available for the Psion Work*about*.

For *serious* users only...

Disk wallets

For the ultimate accessory freak, Vega also offer dedicated wallets for SSDs, and even the tiny CompactFlash disks. Both cases hold four memory modules, and both come in saddle leather or antique leather with a press-stud closure. Disk wallets cost £14.95 each.

Memory disk cases—indispensable?

The biggest criticism I could find in the entire Vega range was that the fine-toothed nylon zippers used don't feel quite as solid as old-fashioned metal zips. Having said that they're probably just as durable, but they don't have the same quality feel.

In fairness to Vega, I don't know of any other Psion case manufacturer that uses metal zips either, but considering that these are some of the highest quality cases around I think they should consider this as a final touch.

Steve Clack

Vega cases

From: Vega Holsters

Availability: now

Contact: 01706 644177

Price: See article (all inc. VAT)

Quality:

Value:

AA Hotel Guide

Series 3a/3c

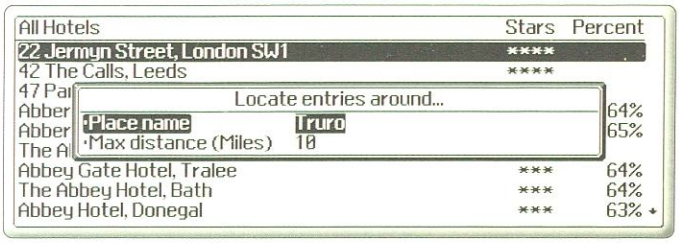
I've already confessed my affinity towards data-based software products within the pages of *Palmtop*. I believe that a good palmtop computer shouldn't be just a word processor and diary, but a repository of useful information too. There are so many situations that require the toting of reference documents and guide books—most of which would be more compact and more quickly accessible if they resided in an electronic format rather than a paper one. Nobody enjoys endless scanning through paper indexes and contents lists, and searchable, computerised data removes this bugbear. Few people are prepared to carry a mass of reference books around with them, and palmtop-based data files offer the only realistic, portable solution.

Information with a significant graphical component (pictorial encyclopedias, most product catalogues, etc.) is not well suited to palmtop computers, at least not until fast graphics and colour screens become commonplace. Purely textual information such as this hotel listing and guide *is* particularly well suited to the text-only approach of the Series 3a/3c.

FawnBench's 'AA Hotel Guide' is essentially a digital version of the softback book of the same title. Containing entries for more than 4000 AA-inspected hotels in Britain and Ireland, it includes information on AA star ratings and other awards, percentage scores for overall facilities, contact details, room specifications, restaurant information, prices, and so on. The data is essentially one 3a/3c screenful for each hotel—just enough to make a reasonable appraisal of the location before committing to booking your reservation.

Going beyond merely a searchable and filterable database, this software offers two other especially useful features. The first is the ability to intelligently search for all hotels within a user-definable radius. This is ideal if you're not intimately familiar with the area you'll be staying in, as the search brings up a summary listing showing exactly how far from the selected destination all the possible hotels are.

The other major feature is only useful for those who already have (or are willing



A great feature. Searching for all hotels in a given radius of any town, city or airport

A 'found set' of hotels in the selected area, showing quality ratings and locations

All Hotels	Stars	Percent	Miles
Alverton Manor, Truro	***	71%	0.3
Aviary Court Hotel, Redruth	**	69%	3.7
Broadmead Hotel, Falmouth	**	63%	7.7
Brookdale Hotel, Truro	***	68%	0.4
Carlton Hotel, Truro	**	62%	0.6
Carthion Hotel, Falmouth	**	65%	8.2
Crossroads Hotel, Redruth	**	68%	6.6
Falmouth Beach Resort Hotel, Falmouth	***	70%	8.3
Falmouth Hotel, Falmouth	***	65%	7.9

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▸** @ (Country House) 75% The Hundred House Hotel, Ruan High Lanes
TR2 5JR ☎ 01872 501336
Closed Nov-Feb
10 en suite (bth/shr) (2 fmly) CTV in all bedrooms 15P No coachs Croquet
lawn English Cuisine Coffee am Tea pm No smoking in restaurant Last d
7.30pm
ROOMS: (incl. bkfst & dinner) s fr £60; d fr £115 LB
OFF-PEAK: (incl. bkfst & dinner) s fr £55; d fr £105
MEALS: Dinner fr £22.50 *
CARDS: Mastercard American Express Visa
```

The full information for a given hotel—just enough to make an educated appraisal

to purchase) FawnBench's *Geographical Database* product (reviewed in issue 14), allowing any selected hotel to be accurately located on GD's detailed map system. This menu option only appears when Geographical Database is already installed and running, simply disappearing from view in other cases.

All the expected searching, filtering and sorting capabilities are present and correct, and the whole program exhibits a decent turn of speed. There are a few additional neat touches such as a menu option to bring up an instant year-to-view calendar, and a useful 'history' function that displays a list of the most recently accessed hotel details.

Overall, the computerised AA Hotel Guide is of considerable benefit to the frequent traveller, and saves tedious thumbing through a bulky book, provided you have around 600K of free storage space for it.

The floppy disk price of £24 (inc.VAT) covers *lifetime* updates, which includes future Series 5 versions when they become available. It is also available on SSD. You can even try before you buy with a downloadable 30-day evaluation copy available from *ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/Fawnbench/aahotel.htm*

Steve Clack

AA Hotel Guide

From: FawnBench

Availability: now

Contact: 01276 451239

Runs on: Series 3a/3c (S5 soon)

Supplied on: floppy disk / SSD

Price: £24 disk / £49.95 SSD

Quality:

Value:

De3ender

Series 3a/3c

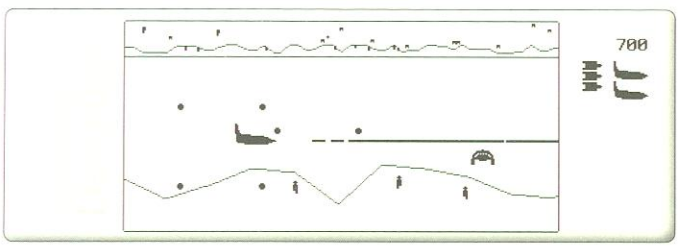
I admit it. I was there. Stuck in dingy amusement arcades in the early 1980s playing all those incredibly addictive arcade games. Pacman, Missile Command, Battle Zone—and of course, the colossus of them all, *Defender*.

Seeing Defender for the first time in the flesh was a shock. There were so many buttons to remember, so many things to shoot and everything happened so gut-wrenchingly fast. Aliens are coming to steal your humanoids and if they succeed in getting them to the top of the screen they turn mutant and are then most definitely out to get you. In your defence are a laser cannon and a limited number of smart bombs.

Arcade games on the humble Psion 3a have often been a disappointment in the past, but Mark Wheadon's done a terrific job in writing a Defender clone. It's completely faithful to the original, and game speed and overall feel are as far as I can tell identical. Obviously the graphics are a tiny bit scaled down from the original's 14 inch screen, but gameplay doesn't suffer at all, with smooth animation and super-fast scrolling.

It has to be said that Mark's broken a lot of the rules of Psion-styling in making De3ender, going so far as to use the 'Help' key to operate the spaceship's thruster, and with a menu key that only works when no game is in progress. But these are minor quibbles. De3ender is just as addictive as its full-size predecessor and a contender for Jumpy's crown as the best Psion arcade game ever.

Steve Litchfield



'D*e3ending*' your humans—a trip down memory lane...

De3ender

From: Palmscape

Availability: Now

Contact: www.palmscape.com

Runs on: Series 3a/3c

Supplied on: for download only

Price: £12 (shareware)

Quality:

Value:

FOR SALE, WANTED, ETC...

ITEMS FOR SALE

Purple Software OrgChart and DrawIt on floppy disk - £15 each, RangerDisk floppy disk drive (with mains adaptor) for Series 3a - £49. All with manuals. Also 'Introduction to Using the Series 3' - £4.75, Covertec open case for Series 3/5, with shoulder holster - £19, SSD 'toast rack' - £3.50.

Contact: John on 01494 864273

Psion Siena 1MB with spare battery cover panel and quick reference guide, brand new - £135 ono.

Contact: Leo on 07050 105106

Series 3a (2MB) with user manual, programming manual and soft leather case, PsiWin software, cable and manual. Also Finance pack 3a on SSD and 256K flash SSD, 2 mains adaptors and black aluminium desk stand - £225 the lot.

Contact: Neil Griffin on 01274 827372 evenings
Fax: 01274 227255
Email: n.griffin@virgin.net

Series 3 (256K), A-link with PocketFS, 3 Psion and 2 programming manuals, imperfect screen hence £50. Also Chess, 64K and 128K SSDs all 3 for £60, or £100 for everything.

Contact: James Jameson on 0181 977 7367
Email: james@jamphy.demon.co.uk

1MB Series 3a Psion - just had new case and keyboard (ENGLISH), Psion 3Fax, Ranger external disc drive, Cyclone external disc drive, serial printer cable, PsiWin software, cable, etc., 2MB Flash SSD, 1MB Flash SSD, 512K RAM SSD, 3a Chess, Series 3 Tools, a load of other odds & ends software - includes all manuals, all in superb condition - £425

Contact: Richard Chandless
Fax/tel (France) 33 450 442 491
Email: admonfr@aol.com

Psion 3a (1MB), Executive leather case, PsiWin and 3link cable (9 and 25 pin), mains adaptor, 2MB flash SSD, AutoRoute Express SSD, 3Fax modem, 'How to write your own series 3a programs' book, 'Useful programs for the Psion Series 3a Psion Series 3a' book and programming manual. All boxed with manuals - £400 o.n.o. (prepared to sell separately).

Contact: Reid Hutchison on 01346 510481 (after 6pm)
Email: 100634.2321@compuserve.com

Monopoly for Series 3a/3c, on floppy disk with instructions - £20 ono.

Contact: Jonathan Thomas on 01622 729063

Geofox One (16MB) with international power supply, handbook and CDs, leather case, PC connection lead - £325 ono.

Contact: Tom Menzies on 0131 4780467
Fax: 0131 4773065
Email: tmenzies@netcomuk.co.uk

WANTED

Psion 3Fax modem and/or Series 3a compatible Internet/e-mail software. Willing to pay upwards of 50% of original price.

Contact: Paddy Birbeck on 01223 243156

LIVE IN THE LEICESTERSHIRE AREA?

If you live in the South Leicestershire area and are interested in meeting with other Psion users then please contact me on **0116 2752030** (evenings and weekends - answerphone available). I envisage the meetings to be held, say, on a monthly basis, at the Bell Inn, Leicester Road, Narborough.

Michael Bradbury

DO YOU LIVE IN PORTUGAL?

User would like to get together with other Psion users in Portugal. Email mop54308@mail.telepac.pt or telephone **69 860 379**.

Joao Manuel Salgado

CAN YOU HELP?

As principal of the Dyslexia Institute in Stone, Staffordshire, which is a charity teaching individuals with learning difficulties, and a Psion 3c user myself, I note with interest that many of your readers have recently upgraded, or are considering upgrading, to the Series 5. Many of our students are not only having to cope with literacy problems, but are also financially constrained. Would any of your readers be interested in donating their old Series 3 to a worthy cause such as ours? I can be contacted on **01785 818783**, and would of course be willing to reimburse postage where necessary.

Gina Plant, Centre Principal

Hi-Tech Hi-Fi Heaven

It's easy to use your Psion's built-in DATA to keep an inventory of any kind of collection. Steve Litchfield uses this application to catalogue his own CDs—complete with sound and pictures!

It never ceases to amaze me how Psion's built-in DATA application attracts equal amounts of positive and negative comment. On the one hand it's criticised for being too simple, with no relational facilities, and on the other praised for being usable even by beginners and adaptable to as many tasks as the user has imagination.

Regular readers will guess that I'm of the latter school of thought, and like many other Psion users throughout the world I regularly use DATA to perform tasks that sometimes even its authors wouldn't have thought of. One of the commonest uses (apart from the obvious one of keeping names and addresses) is to catalogue collections such as books, CDs, videos or photographs. In fact, many people will already have tried such a system but given up for various reasons. My particular interest is CDs and that's where I'll focus.

Do it with *any* Psion!

The first reason for this article is to pass on a few tips and observations that will hopefully encourage you to persevere with DATA in the rôle of a collection manager. The second is that the Series 5's object-embedding features have brought a whole new dimension to the subject, with its graphics and sound enriching what was previously a fairly 'dry' exercise. Don't be put off if you still have a Siena, Series 3a or 3c, though. By using the list view and sorting abilities of JBData on the 3a or DATA itself on the Siena or 3c, many of the observations below are equally valid on the 16-bit machines.

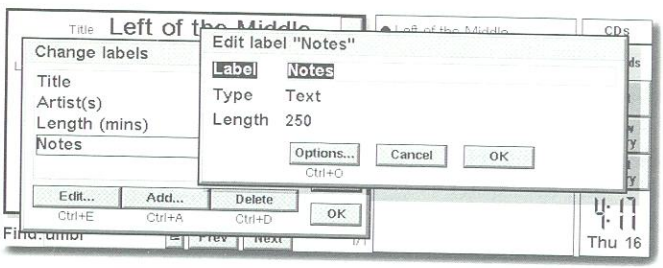
Be realistic

One mistake often made when setting up DATA labels for use in cataloguing CDs is to think of every possible parameter (publisher, distributor, sleeve type, date of release, track listing and lengths and so on) and then set up a label for each. What seemed like a good idea at the start quickly becomes a chore by the time you're adding in details for the 10th CD, and you lose interest completely by the 20th. Make do with just a few labels to begin with, and then adding in new material will be a 30 second operation that's manageable and practical. For my database, I used Title, Artist name, Length and Notes. This last, of course, is generic enough that all those extra bits of information mentioned above can be slotted in here if needed for favourite albums.

Keeping notes

It's very tempting on the Series 5 to make the Notes field of type 'Memo', meaning that you can type as much text into it as you want, but I'd suggest resisting the temptation and plumping for a simple text field (set the length to the maximum of 250 characters). Using straight text fields makes it far easier to export the information to another format (e.g. a spreadsheet or a PC database) if the need arises. Don't worry about that 250 character limit, as you can always embed a WORD object here if you absolutely have to, which of course has no size limits at all.

Do keep the label names short, too, so that when viewing entries on the main DATA screen the labels don't intrude too much on the CD information. I used 'Length (mins)' instead of 'Running length (minutes)' for just this reason.



Setting up labels for the task ahead

Adding sound clips

One of the most important things about such a labour of love as a computerised collection is that compiling it should be *fun*, and luckily the Series 5 makes this very easy indeed. UK residents may remember a national radio station recently running a series of listeners' favourite snatches of songs, e.g. the guitar solo in song X, or the ad-libbed vocal at the end of song Y. What caught

my imagination was the fact that few of these snippets were over about ten seconds and yet each managed to capture my fond memory of the song as a whole. Which of course is where the Series 5's embedding of sound clips comes in.

Cds

Europa
Likeahur
Memories
Myheart
Stairway

Sitting in front of the hi-fi, recording selected bits of my favourite songs proved to be quite absorbing and a lot of fun. At the end of a hard day, I can now cheer myself up by playing some of my best-loved musical moments wherever I happen to be, and without the aid of a tape or CD player!

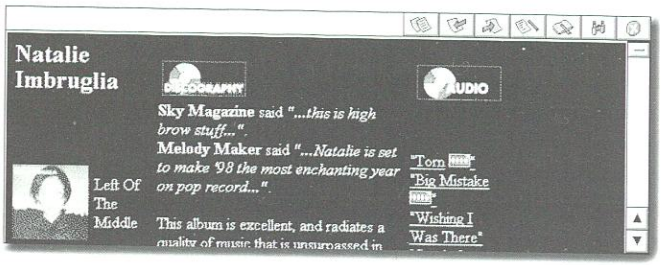
While editing an entry, just tap in sequence on 'Object'/'Insert object'/'Record' and you'll find yourself in the built-in RECORD application. My clips were recorded holding the Psion about 2 feet away from the speakers at normal listening volume. The Series 5 microphone is quite a bit more sensitive than that on the Series 3 and putting it too close to the sound source can lead to distortion. Once recorded to your satisfaction, set the playback volume as required (I always move the slider to its maximum setting) before tapping 'Done' to return to the database entry, which you then save in the normal way.

Frugal sounds

Don't worry too much about the size of the sound clips. A ten second burst of music adds about 75K to the size of a record and whilst this will seem horribly wasteful to a Series 3 user, Series 5 owners are now used to 32MB CompactFlash cards for under £180, so a database with 50 separate 75K sound clips will still only be 3MB, a paltry 10% of a single disk.

Try not to go overboard, though. The larger and the more numerous the sound clips get, the longer they take to save and compress, and of course the more disk space is used up. For my CD database I used two 30 second clips and ten 10 second ones, giving me a database size of just over a megabyte.

An 'unsinkable' sound clip inside a collection entry


Natalie Imbruglia
DISCOGRAPHY
AUDIO
Sky Magazine said "...this is high brow stuff...".
Melody Maker said "...Natalie is set to make '98 the most enchanting year on pop record...".
This album is excellent, and radiates a
Left Of The Middle
"Torn"
"Big Mistake"
"Wishing I Was There"

No PC required! Grabbing a suitable picture from the web using Message Suite

3a/3c sound clips

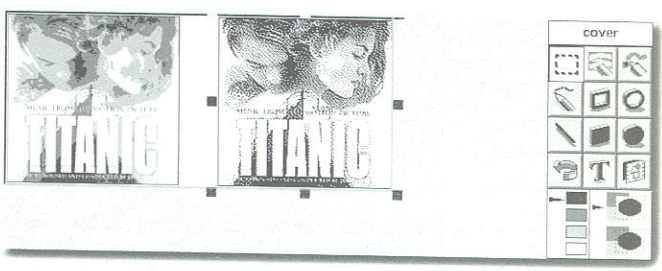
Series 3a and 3c owners needn't feel too cheated by all this, as you can still have fun sampling sections of your favourite tunes—you just have to keep them in separate files. You can store them in a new system screen list next to the DATA icon, with filenames referenced in a special field in the database.

Pictures too...

The other advantage of using the Series 5 for this sort of work is the built-in graphics. For a photograph collection, thumbnails of each one would be a real boon. Even including CD covers, as I've done here, makes a major difference to the perceived pleasure of browsing through the database. Each thumbnail graphic only takes a few bytes of memory and is trivially small compared to the sound clips, so you can afford to have pictures for every entry in your collection.

The only disadvantage is that it's slightly labour-intensive getting the images into the database in the first place, but what price a labour of love and, as with the sound clips, it's all great fun and there's a real sense of accomplishment when your precious album covers appear on your Series 5 screen.

The first step is obviously to get an electronic version of the cover image that you can manipulate. The two most common ways of doing this are either to grab them from an on-line CD store or fan page on the Internet, or to use a scanner on your PC to scan the covers



The difference between converted 4-colour and dithered graphics from a desktop machine

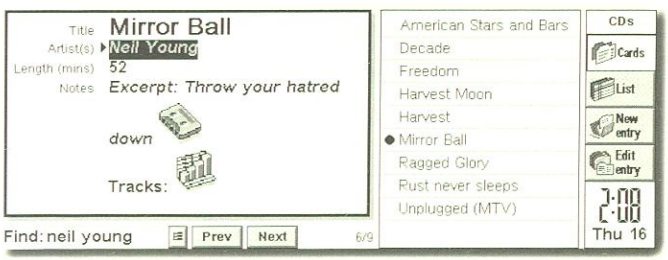
It's that woman again! Enhancing your collection database with pretty pictures

yourself. Ultimately, you need to have each cover picture in a Series 5 SKETCH file on your Psion. Not owning a scanner, I opted to grab images off the web, resampling them in the PC shareware PaintShopPro to about 150 pixels square. Using the new PsiWin 2.1, I was able to drag-and-drop the saved BMP images straight into SKETCH files on the Psion. Because SKETCH is unfortunately limited to 4 'colours' (greys), I found that my images looked best when 'dithered' (converted to patterns of dots—as in a newspaper photo) on the PC before the copying and conversion to the Psion. Do experiment, though, as different types of artwork respond better to different techniques.

It would also have been very easy to do my web surfing on the Series 5 itself, either using screen grabs <Ctrl><Fn><Shift><S> or 'Save image as' to get 'EPOC picture' (MBM) files ready for importing into SKETCH. Note that SKETCH is fairly good at resizing and manipulating images (see 'Modern Art' in issue 17 for details).

Insert the images

Having now got your favourite covers into correctly-sized SKETCH format on your Series 5, it's a simple matter to insert them into each entry. Open up the first image in SKETCH and do 'Select all' and then 'Copy' to put the picture into the clipboard. Switch back to your CD database, find the relevant album and choose 'Edit entry'. Move the cursor inside the Notes field and tap in sequence on 'Object'/'Insert object'/'Sketch' to bring up a blank



Searching for a particular artist...

SKETCH object. Use 'Paste' to copy in your chosen cover image and tap 'Done'. Save the entry in the usual way and that's it.

The above steps may seem a little long-winded, but with practice they only take a few seconds and the end result is certainly worthwhile. As with sound clips, you may not want the hassle of producing graphics for every CD you own, but it's nice to know how to do it should you feel the urge.

Sorting the database

For my CD database, I chose to set up DATA to sort on the album title, but it's really up to you. The only catch of doing everything by title is that there tends to be a block of albums called 'Greatest Hits', indistinguishable in the entry browser.

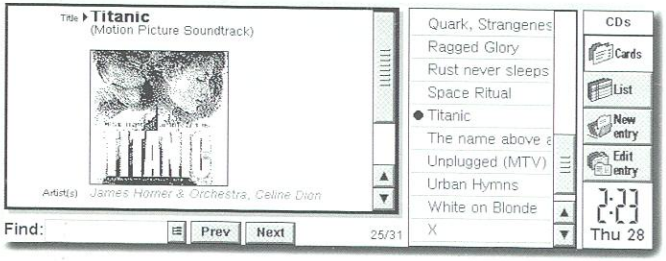
The search facilities of DATA work in the usual way, of course, so you can search for all CDs with 'Love' in the title, or all entries by 'Neil Young', as shown in the screen shot. I know I warned otherwise at the start of this article, but if you want to be *really* fanatical you can type in track listings for each CD, giving the ability to search for a particular word in any song title in your entire collection.

Another option on the Series 5 is to insert track listings as embedded spreadsheets, giving you fancy formatting and tabulation of the song numbers, titles and running times.

The power of DATA

I thought it significant a few years ago when Alan Richey (RMR Software) launched his dedicated 'Collection Manager' software, that even though the application was excellent it failed to sell many copies. The truth is that virtually everything you need to manage a collection of CDs, books, videos or photos is already there inside your trusty Psion.

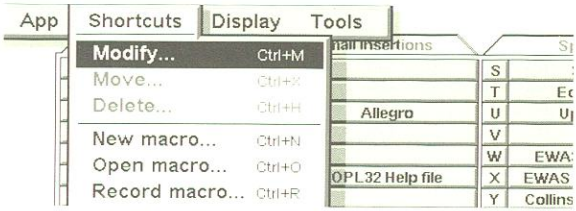
The best thing of all about keeping your collections on your Series 3 or Series 5 is that the details (and perhaps sound clips and images) will be always available, whether showing your friends in a restaurant or having a browse in the lunch hour at work.



Another finished entry

Time savers

It's possible to automate many Series 5 functions using macro software. Find out which ones achieve 'Holy Grail' status...



by Daniel Madden

Here starts a quest. A personal quest for greater efficiency and a simpler life.

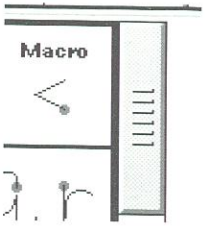
Though my Series 5's system screen is undoubtedly logical and highly structured, it lends itself far too well to spreading documents far and wide across my filing system. The inevitable result is that many pen taps or keypresses are needed in order to traverse my folder structure. Psion did build an extremely basic (only one folder) bookmark feature into the system screen, but I have to say that I outgrew such a simple navigation device within an hour of unpacking my Series 5.

A second frustration (though most other operating systems have the same limit) is only being able to have one item at a time stored in the system clipboard. In the quest to become more efficient, I keep a WORD file of commonly-needed bits and pieces and have to keep switching to it, copying chunks of text, switching back and pasting it in again.

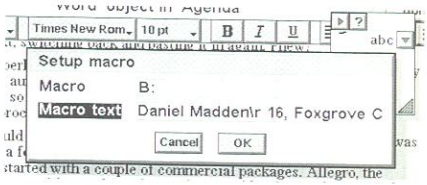
Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, a keystroke-recorder or macro facility would let me automate some of the things I do regularly. I'm not much of a programmer, so any macro utility would have to lead me through the automation process gently.

Allegro

My ideal would be to find a single utility to do everything I need, but I was prepared for a few compromises. I started with a couple of commercial packages. The handwriting recognition package Allegro (reviewed in issue 15) was the first piece of software exam-



Telling *Allegro* to switch to 'macro' mode



Setting up macro text

ined.

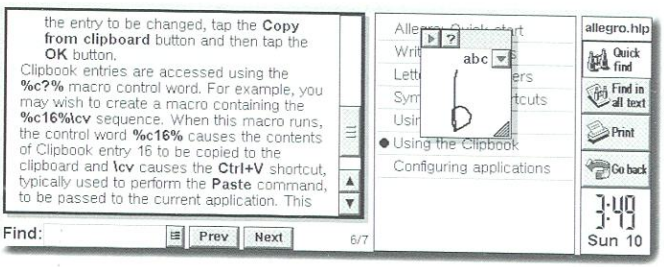
Although the primary function of Allegro is its ability to recognise letter shapes, the authors have built in serviceable macro and clipbook functions as well. Up to 26 Macros are each assigned to a letter of the alphabet and can contain a string of characters. By embedding special character sequences into the text, I was able to achieve basic formatting and cursor control. For example '\r' behaved the same as pressing <Enter> and '\k' the same as pressing the <Up arrow> key.

The clipbook worked well, and I was able to add as many entries as I liked, each containing text and/or objects. The mechanism for pasting in a clipbook entry is to include yet another unmemorable sequence into a macro string, but I found an easy way to get it right was to paste the sequence in from Allegro's help screens. Although clipbook entries can be titled, they have to be inserted via macros, meaning I still had to remember which macro letter was assigned to which clipbook operation.

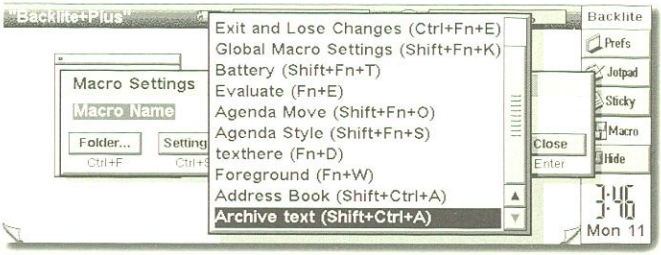
If I was a regular Allegro user, these functions would fill my second and third requirements to a large extent, though the complexity involved in setting up automated operations (involving cursor movement, etc.) might deter me from using macros regularly.

Navigator

All of which would leave my first requirement, that of needing a quick way to open up far-flung documents with the fewest number of keystrokes or pen taps. Again, one of Purple Software's products could do the job, with


the entry to be changed, tap the **Copy from clipboard** button and then tap the **OK** button.
Clipbook entries are accessed using the **%c?%** macro control word. For example, you may wish to create a macro containing the **%c16%\cv** sequence. When this macro runs, the control word **%c16%** causes the contents of Clipbook entry 16 to be copied to the clipboard and **\cv** causes the **Ctrl+V** shortcut, typically used to perform the **Paste** command, to be passed to the current application. This
Find:
Prev
Next
6/7
Using the Clipbook
Configuring applications
allegro.hlp
Quick find
Find in all text
Print
Go back
Sun 10

Looking up the macro syntax for *Allegro*'s clipbook



Browsing the defined macro hotkeys in *Back-Lite Plus*

the commercial Navigator (reviewed on page 18) including in its portfolio a 'workspace' on which I was able to place icons for specific folders and files. But this is a bit like buying a Porsche and just using it for trips to the local grocer. Expensive and over the top unless I could find a use for Navigator's many other features.

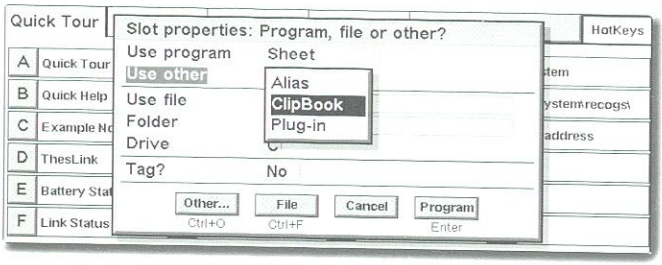
BackLite Plus

The same applies to a certain extent to Palmscape's shareware BackLite Plus, which boasts macros and shortcuts amidst a long list of other functions, including 'Post-It' notes, battery monitoring and a graphical jotter. Useful though all of these are, I was on a specific mission. BackLite Plus' macros have to be constructed as OPL/32 modules, which immediately rules out somebody of my limited ability. Although a handy selection of common macros was supplied with the program, I found the myriad of nested dialogs a little confusing, and would have welcomed more words of explanation in each one rather than the buttons alone. The lack of any online help didn't help matters, with the author only supplying a WORD file by way of documentation. This approach led in my case to the 'manual' being hundreds of miles away when needed most. Yes, I know I *should* have copied it over to my Series 5 before moving off, but I shouldn't have to.

Using key combinations as shortcuts to programs and documents worked well, though I was slightly worried by the way the utility let me happily assign a key combination to more than one operation at the same time. I was thus left with the impression that BackLite Plus is a super productivity tool for programmers but yet again one that doesn't have answers for all my questions.

Hotkeys

Hotkeys (by Henry Hirst) is a shareware utility I'd often heard mentioned in the same breath as BackLite Plus, and I was expecting more of the same. In fact I found it more focussed and more applicable to the job in hand. Up to five pages of hotkey 'slots' (24 per page) can be defined. Each slot can be set to launch (or switch to) an application,



Choosing the contents of a *HotKeys* 'slot'

open a document or insert some specific formatted text. In addition to activating each slot by bringing HotKeys to the foreground and selecting from the page, I found the text-based 'clipbook' fragments could be inserted directly into the current document with a global hot-key. So for example I set <Control><Fn><A> to insert my address wherever I needed it.

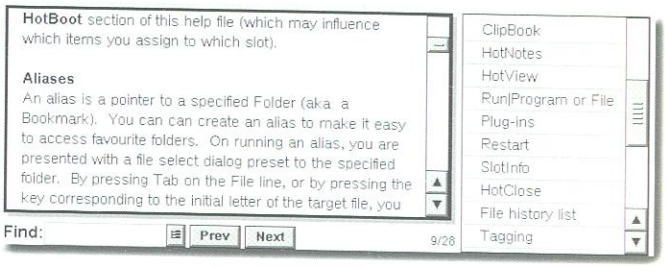
Though very competent for auto-insertion of text and for accessing commonly-used documents, HotKeys fell short of my last requirement—I found no macro facility other than a rudimentary 'Plug-In' system which runs OPO modules. Apparently the author is currently working on a user-friendly macro recorder add-in, which will be well worth looking out for.

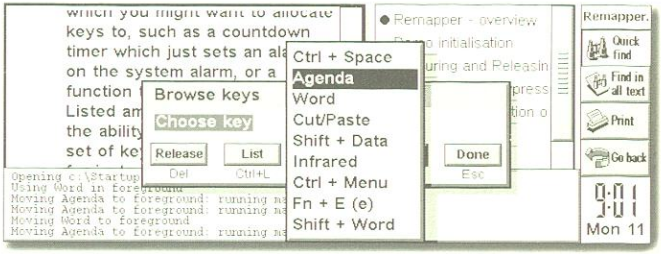
I was still very impressed with the utility as a whole: a fairly simple interface, a truly great set of help screens and example files, and some genuinely innovative features. I especially liked the way HotKeys goes where PsiWin fears to tread with its 'HotClose' and 'HotBoot' pages to automate stop/start handling of documents and third-party applications.

Remapper

On to the last two utilities I'd been recommended to try out, both freeware. Richard Reeve's Remapper enabled me to 're-map' keypresses to other keys, combinations of keys or recorded macros. For example, I was able to map <Control><Fn><T> to perform a sequence of recorded keystrokes in my

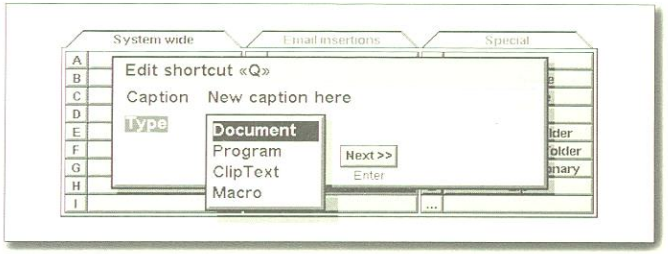
A tiny fragment of *HotKeys'* excellent help screens


HotBoot section of this help file (which may influence which items you assign to which slot).
Aliases
An alias is a pointer to a specified Folder (aka a Bookmark). You can can create an alias to make it easy to access favourite folders. On running an alias, you are presented with a file select dialog preset to the specified folder. By pressing Tab on the File line, or by pressing the key corresponding to the initial letter of the target file, you
Find:
Prev
Next
9/28
ClipBook
HotNotes
HotView
Run|Program or File
Plug-ins
Restart
SlotInfo
HotClose
File history list
Tagging



Browsing the list of *Remapper* definitions

accounts spreadsheet, involving cursor movements and cut/paste commands. Although the author supplies a good set of example 'remaps', I had all sorts of problems trying to emulate them with my own, and, as with BackLite Plus, was frustrated and confused by dialogs with buttons and little or no explanatory text. A rudimentary keypress browser was the only way of looking up what had already been remapped, and even the Help screens were not as helpful as I'd hoped.

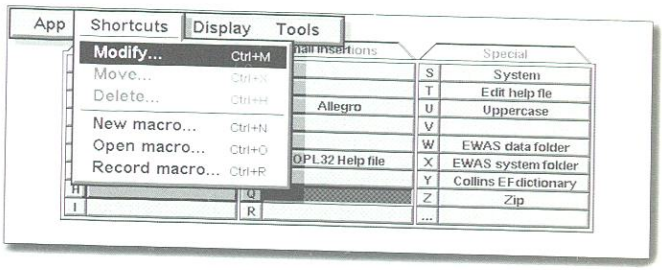


Simple and intuitive choices for each *Macro5* shortcut

Macro5

Being of optimistic character (and having cheated by trying out all the programs briefly before starting this article) I was looking forward to the light at the end of the tunnel. The light in my case was the freeware application Macro5, written and supported enthusiastically online by Pascal Nicholas. I knew I'd found a winner when the first couple of paragraphs of Macro5's 'readme.txt' file listed the same three functions I'd described my need for—and in the same order! The author might as well have designed his program specifically for me. The 'readme.txt' file is in fact the sole documentation for the utility, though in the final event this turned out to be the only black mark I could chalk up against Macro5.

As with HotKeys, the core of Macro5 proved to be its panels of shortcuts. Each one can be a shortcut to either a document, another program, up to 255



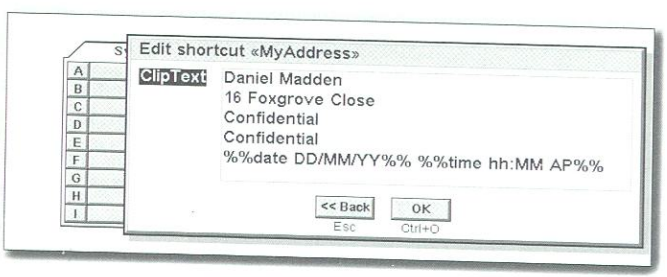
One of Macro5's shortcut panels and the main menu

characters of formatted text or a macro. All four options were trivial to set up and well presented.

As an example of each, I was able to set up one shortcut to jump straight to my main address book, one to Collins English-French dictionary, another to insert my full address (complete with embedded date and time) and one to execute a recorded macro of keystrokes to copy spreadsheet cells from one column to another.

Even though Macro5 also won't win prizes for the verbosity of its dialogs, I found them intuitive and well-planned. Although it supports fully-programmed OPL macros, the built-in macro recorder made the process so easy that no OPL knowledge at all was required. I just told Macro5 which application to switch to and then started tapping away. After the recording process was complete I only needed to 'Translate' (a built-in OPL menu command) the generated code and then assign the new macro to a shortcut.

The feature I'd admired in Navigator earlier, whereby I could be transported quickly to a specific folder anywhere on my Series 5, I found could be emulated by Macro5 with a little ingenuity. It cleverly allows 'System' as an application and so I was able to set up a macro to switch to the system screen, activate Psion's built-in 'Go to bookmark' command and then navigate from there using 'Current disk' to switch disks and typing folder names' initial letters to make the macro as robust as possible. The macro only took about three seconds to strut its stuff by replaying all



Formatted and interactive text inside a shortcut

Recording with *Macro5*...

the necessary keystrokes, and although my heart was in my mouth the first few occasions I tried it, I soon learned to relax and enjoy the show!

In addition to the 78 possible shortcuts, which have to be accessed through the alphabetic panels, Macro5 offers another eight system-wide hotkeys. These can be assigned to the same tasks as panel shortcuts but work from anywhere with the minimum of fuss. As with the HotKeys program, options for execution of macros and sets of macros at startup or turn-on mean that I'll probably still be tinkering with Macro5 in a year or so's time.

Summary

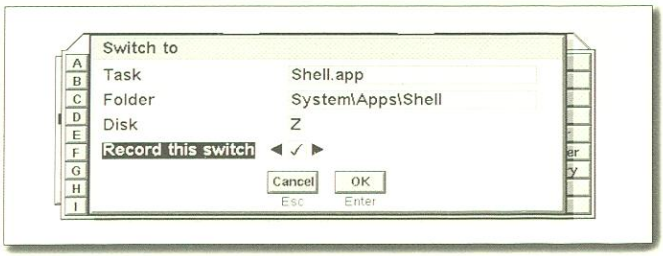
My own quest has come to an end, but I'd be the first to admit that everyone's requirements are different. If you already have the commercial Allegro or Navigator for their 'core' features, you may be pleasantly surprised by experimenting with what else they have to offer. If you'd rather save your money and go with freeware or shareware, most of the utilities above are well worth a try and all have their own strengths and weaknesses. Have a look at the table on the next page for further details. I haven't given star ratings as the programs are too dissimilar to be compared directly in this way.

For beginners and experts alike, I'd recommend you start with Macro5. It's free, it's extensible, it's easy to use and it genuinely saves time. What more could you want?

3a/3c macros

Good macro software also exists for the Series 3a/3c machines. This topic has been covered in detail in Rick Andrews' article in issue 3.

You can also find the Series 3a/3c *Kmac* and *Macsys* macro software on the *Palmtop* CD-ROM.



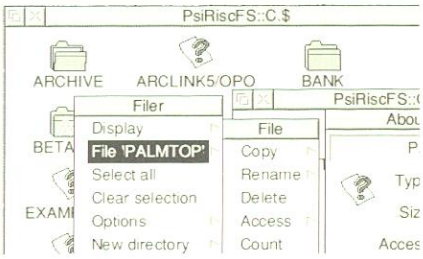
Preparing to record a system screen navigation macro

	Allegro	Navigator	BackLite Plus	Hotkeys	Remapper	Macro5
Macro Support	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
No. of macros available with app. or on web site	0	n/a	10	6, registered users only	0	Over 50
Macro recording	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Shortcuts to documents	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Program launching	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clipbook text	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Backlight/contrast control	No/No	No/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	No/No	Yes/Yes
Other features	Handwriting recognition	File and folder management, ZIP handling	Graphical and text-based jotters/ clipboards, battery monitoring, night clock	File history, HotBoot and HotClose file and program automation, HotNotes jotter	Complex application and document launching by sensing pen movements	
Version reviewed	1.01	1.01	2.1	2.2	1.0	2.3 beta2
Price	£50	£30	£12	£10	FREE	FREE

All shareware and freeware is available from the usual sources, see page 105 for details

Acorn connectivity update

John Woodthorpe provides an update on the latest Acorn-to-Psion connectivity solutions



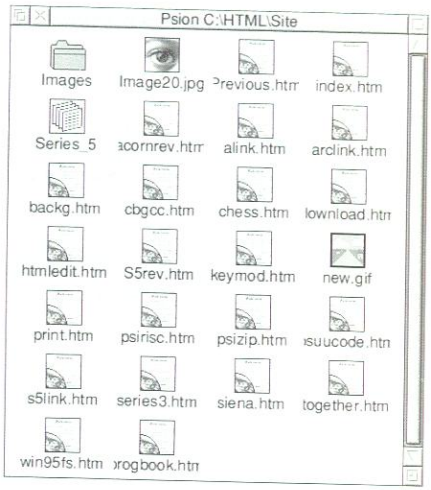
Introduction

I reported on Psion-to-Acorn-connectivity last year, and the Series 5 makes an update necessary. *PocketFS* was commissioned by Acorn to link the Pocket Book family of rebadged Series 3 and 3a machines to RISC OS computers. Unfortunately, it doesn't work with the newer Psions, and anyone wanting to link a Series 3c or Series 5 to their Acorn desktop computer has had to rely on a comms application to transfer files, and the built-in file import and export filters in the Psion. That has been particularly frustrating with the relative lack of file convertors in the Series 5, meaning that the first ARM-powered Psion had the worst connectivity to Acorn's ARM-powered machines of any recent Psion apart from the Siena. Fortunately, that is changing thanks to Xemplar, a commercial developer, and a shareware author.

First, Innovative Media Solutions (IMS) released *PsionFS*, a shareware RISC OS application to convert MBM files to sprites, and then announced the development of a file transfer application called *PsiRisc*. Over last Christmas I decided to set up a web site dealing with the issues involved in connecting Acorn and Psion computers. That arose from the column I write in Archive, a monthly Acorn subscription magazine, and was designed on my Series 5 with Russ Spooner's excellent *HTMLEdit*. It went live on New Year's Day at the address below:

www.armlink.ndirect.co.uk

and the following day Paul Vigay released a beta of a shareware application called *ArcLink5*, with IMS launching PsiRisc a few weeks later. This coincided with the announcement of the latest Pocket Book machine, arising from a collaboration between Psion and Xemplar (the Acorn-Apple education joint venture). This is a rebadged Series 3c with the serial port speed-doubled to 115,200 baud, and aimed at the UK education market. It follows the highly successful Pocket Book and Pocket Book II machines which did so much to provide low cost computing in many schools. This development made it necessary to have a file transfer application to link the new machine to Acorn RISC OS computers in schools, and Xemplar commissioned IMS to provide *PsiRisc* to do this. As the shareware application was available first, I'll start with that.



Directory display in ArcLink5

ArcLink5

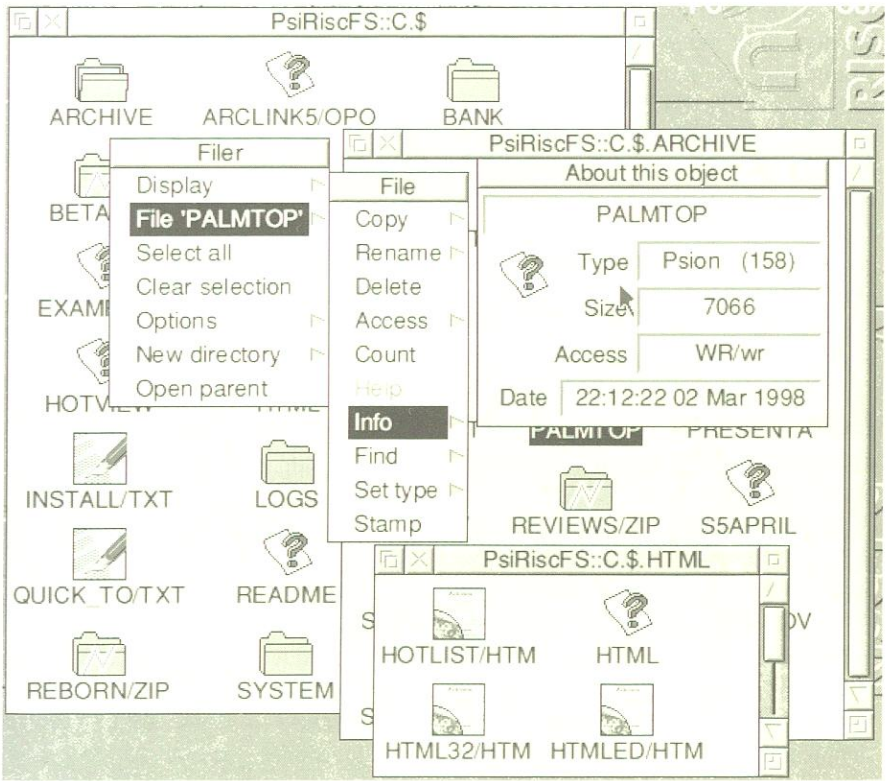
This is available from Paul Vigay's web site: *www.interalpha.netcustomer/pvigay/psion/index.htm* and costs £29.95 to register. It can also be ordered from Norwich Computer Services (details below) for £32. ArcLink5 needs around 170KB (yes, the whole application is less than 200K in size) of disk space to run, and RISC OS 3.10 or above. It works with the Series 5 and Geofox One (and may eventually work on the Series 3c), but currently doesn't convert files. It doesn't use the Psion Link, but includes a small OPO file that must be copied to the EPOC32 machine first (via COMMS or downloaded directly with the Message Suite). Long file names are preserved when used with Win95FS, SparkFS, or any of the other ways of implementing long file names under RISC OS. Whole directories can be transferred as well as single files, but there's currently no automated backup and restore facility. It is still a little prone to occasional serial transfer errors, but generally works well.

To aid in backing up, John Boyce has kindly included the facility in *JB5StopGo* to launch the OPO file instead of starting the Link after closing all applications. I've checked this on the Series 5 and the Geofox, and it will be an ideal partner to ArcLink5.

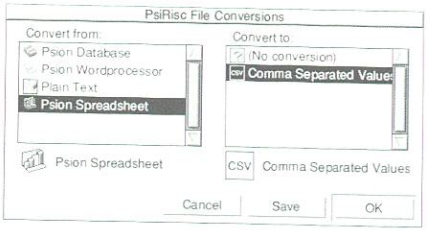
PsiRisc

Unlike ArcLink5, this uses the Link protocol, and consequently works on the full range of Psion machines from the Series 3 and 3a, through the Siena and 3c, to the S5 and Geofox One. It will automatically backup and restore files via a TAR archive, which will provide a way to handle the S5 long file names. Currently it doesn't talk to the 32-bit file server (so it truncates the EPOC filenames), nor does it read the file UIDs. Both of these will be remedied shortly with free upgrades to the full version, which will also include file convertors.

It is implemented as a true filing system, so the EPOC machine looks like another Acorn disc drive, with the ability to directly manipulate files from RISC OS in the same way that PocketFS made possible with the original Series 3 machine, except now it runs at all speeds up to the full 115,200 baud of the Pocket Book III, S5 and Geofox.



PsiRisc display of files on a Geofox One



Conversion window in *PsiRisc*

The current version with 3c file convertors needs around 220K of disc space, and works on RISC OS 3.10 and above. It is also more responsive and flexible than ArcLink5, allowing multiple directories to be open simultaneously on the desktop, and for files to be moved around on the remote machine. The current price is £44.99 (or free with Series 5 and Geofox machines bought from them), and cables and four-way serial switch boxes are available for £24.95 and £29.95 respectively (all including VAT and P&P). Xemplar are also selling the 3c version of PsiRisc, primarily to schools.

Conclusions

After six months of having to do everything manually with COMMS, it is so good to have a choice of applications to transfer files simply and easily. With ArcLink5 being shareware, it is easy to try it out (the unregistered version is time-limited and restricted to 19,200 baud) and decide if you want to register it. Having used both, I find PsiRisc significantly quicker to display directories on the remote machine, and more powerful. I feel that any heavy user of the Series 5 or Geofox would be much happier with PsiRisc, but ArcLink5 would be fine for lighter use.

I'm keen to help Acorn users with Psion or Geofox machines to use them together, and can be contacted via my web site (which has links to the sites of the other folk mentioned here). You can also email me as *jwoodthorpe@ndirect.co.uk* or write to me c/o Norwich Computer Services, address below (the publishers of Archive Magazine).

Addresses

Norwich Computer Services publish Archive Magazine, and are Geofox One and Psion dealers. They are at 96a Vauxhall Street, Norwich, NR2 2SD (tel: 01603 766592, fax: 01603 764011).

IMS are also Geofox and Psion dealers, and produce PsiRisc and PsionFS. They are at Box Bush Farm, West Wick, Weston-super-Mare, BS24 7TF (tel: 01934 522 880, fax: 01934 522 881).

Xemplar Education are at The Quorum, Barnwell Road, Cambridge, CB2 8RE (tel: 01223 724724, fax: 01223 724324).

Thanks for the memory

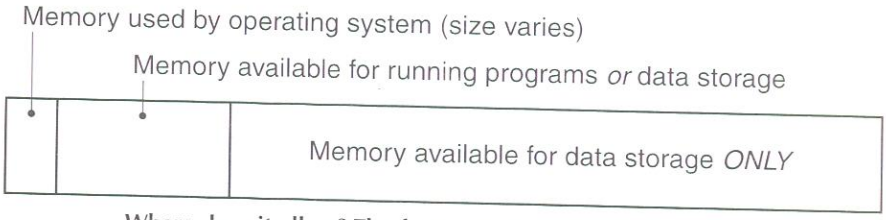
Steve Litchfield answers some common questions on Psion memory usage, explains the principles behind it, and looks at how and when to perform a reset...

Computer memory, much like its human equivalent, is something we often take for granted—which is why we gape open-mouthed in appalled frustration when our PCs crash after we've just entered several pages of text since the last 'save', or when our Psion AGENDA crashes with an inscrutable error message.

Every computer has an array of memory chips destined to act as the 'working area' for everything that happens on the machine. It's the operating system's job to manage the bits and bytes in this working area in order to keep programs from upsetting each other. In a perfect world all applications would behave impeccably and clean up after themselves, and the operating system would help out by further enforcing this friendly behaviour. Unfortunately, many programs don't obey the rules, and operating systems sometimes fail to keep things properly in order, with a crashed application or frozen computer as the unhappy result.

Stable Psions

Compared to Windows 95 (which I have to reboot at least once a day), Psion's EPOC/16 and EPOC/32 operating systems are models of reliability, and it is *extremely* rare to have to reset a Psion for *any* reason. No operating system is perfect, however, and it's worth considering the things which occasionally go wrong, as well as valid reasons to reset the memory of a Series 3 or Series 5 under more controlled circumstances. But before we do that, I'd like to answer a couple of the more common Frequently-Asked-Questions on the subject of memory.


Memory used by operating system (size varies)
Memory available for running programs *or* data storage
Memory available for data storage *ONLY*

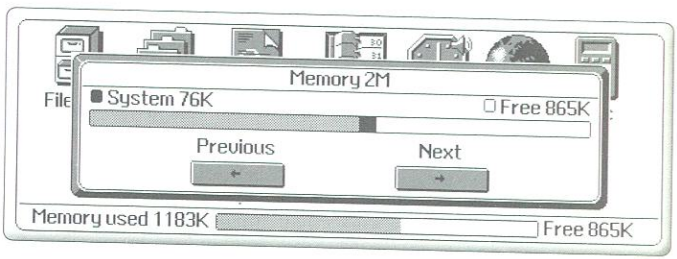
Where does it all go? The famous Series 3a/3c memory map

I've got over a megabyte free on my Series 3a/3c and I'm still getting 'No system memory' messages. You may well have a megabyte (or more) of free memory, but the 3a/3c's 16-bit operating system can only use up to 512K at any time for running programs. Effectively, your 2MB of memory is split internally into 512K system memory for the operating system to use and 1.5MB for your use as the internal 'disk' (though the memory is all solid state, and not a *disk* in the true sense). The above error is usually caused by running too many programs at once and the cure is simply to close a few of them down to free up some memory.

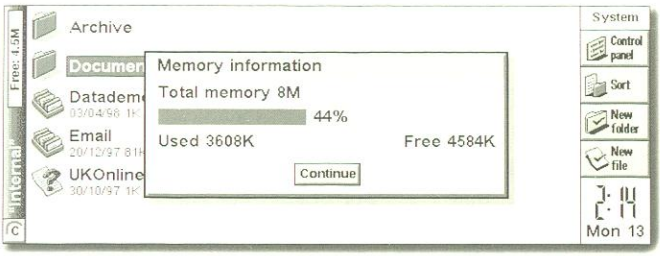
According to my Series 3a/3c, the 'System' is using up over 150KB of memory. I'm sure this figure used to be less than 100K—so where's my memory going? A good question. Out of the box (or after a reset), a 3a/3c's 'System' processes are normally using about 80K of the machine's memory. As time goes on, you run programs and generally use the Psion to run your life. The managing of all these programs requires quite a lot of work to be done by the operating system during which time it builds up tables, lists and work areas in memory to do the job. Once an application is finished with, the system quite often hangs on to these areas so that the next program can be started more quickly (as there's less to set up). On a typical 3a/3c, the memory requirement of 'System' usually levels out at *about* 150K, and this is quite normal.

3a/3c memory madness

On rare occasions, where some rogue application has confused the operating system, both of the above answers can



Examining the memory used by the 'System' processes



Examining memory usage on a Series 5

in fact be wrong. Either the system memory might be seriously out of sorts and not allowing any new programs to be run, or it is seen to be taking up far more resources than it should (over 200K). In both these cases a backup (just in case) followed by a soft reset is a good way to restart the operating system and restore normal operations. All you'll lose is the installed application and group icons, which can usually be restored in a matter of seconds. Another common reason for needing a reset on a 3a/3c is serial (RS232) lead problems, with any number of peculiar happenings liable to confuse the operating system and necessitate action in order to use the link again.

Resetting a Series 3a/3c

Resetting a Series 3a or 3c is as easy as poking an straightened paper clip into the small hole above the <Esc> key. Turn the Psion on again, and you'll hear a beep, and see the original startup logo, followed by a 'virgin' system screen. Install any third-party application icons and all should be back to normal.

Don't worry about needing to know how to do a 'hard' reset on the Series 3 range. Details *are* in the manual, but I have never known *anyone* to need to resort to this operation.

Series 5 troubles too

Series 5 and Geofox One owners needn't feel quite so smug at this point, as the 32-bit version of EPOC is just as susceptible to strange happenings as its predecessor. Yes, EPOC/32 does away with the limits on system memory and the number of running programs, and yes, it's still far more reliable than most PC operating systems. But applications which tend to work at fairly low level (usually those written in C++) still have the potential to grab chunks of memory and never release them properly. And the extra complexity of EPOC/32 means that there are inevitably a few bugs remaining. Symptoms I have personally seen include battery consumption apparently going negative (now wouldn't *that* be great?) and the machine's available memory reducing unnecessarily by as much as 1.5MB.

As a comparison with the 3a/3c mentioned earlier, a Series 5's operating system needs about 870K straight out of the box, rising to as much as 1.5MB after the machine has been used for a while. If you find, after deducting disk space used and memory free, that EPOC/32 seems to be taking more than its fair share of your precious memory then perhaps it's time for a reset.

Resetting a Series 5

The unfolded paper clip comes in handy on the Series 5 as well, but this time the reset hole is inside the backup battery compartment. Turn on the machine again and it will go through its startup sequence.

Restoring screen settings after a reset on a '5' or Geofox is far easier than on the Series 3a/3c, because the application icons are scanned automatically. But the same caution about backing up before you try any of this is still extremely valid. I've heard of occasions when an intended soft reset (just the operating system) turned into an accidental 'hard'-reset, with everything in the internal memory being wiped.

You should *never* need to do a hard reset on purpose, though it's worth noting how it's done for absolute emergencies. Use the paper clip as before, but also hold down both <Shift> keys when turning the Series 5 on again. And if *this* doesn't work, the absolute last resort is to remove all three batteries and leave the machine for at least 10 minutes.

Don't panic

Whether you're having problems with misbehaving applications, frozen system screens or unavailable serial ports, it's important not to panic. In many cases, Psion's applications will have been saving their information onto disk as you go, so there'll be nothing lost should you have to do a reset. And because EPOC is particularly strong at multi-tasking (doing lots of things at the same time), there's every chance you can switch to any other running programs and check your work is saved, do backups, etc., before sitting down to tackle the problem in hand.

Many Psion owners *never* reset their machines. In other words, they start them when first taken out of the box and never reboot them. Ever. This alone is a tremendous testament to the stability of EPOC, and hopefully a comfort to you that any problems you do run into with your Psion's memory are going to be few and far between.

The FIVE zone

A look at the latest developments in the Series 5 world

by Steve Clack and Steve Litchfield

The long wait

The much-awaited ROM version 1.1 update is still nowhere to be seen, despite Psion's official press release late last year stating that *"Psion computers will be making a chargeable ROM upgrade service available to existing Series 5 owners during the first half of 1998"*.

It's quite normal practice for Psion (and other companies in the industry) *not* to pre-announce the release of new products and upgrades, as such news has a tendency to kill sales of existing stocks in the retail channel—understandable as users decide to hold off purchasing until the new product becomes available.

Anyway, despite our best efforts Psion resolutely refuse to give any indication as to when the upgrade will appear. As of now (early June) We have no evidence that it is imminent, so we'll all just have to sit tight and wait. We'll be featuring a comprehensive report as soon as the upgrade is announced—*perhaps* for the next issue of *Palmtop*?

What's in it?

We've also had a complete absence of official feedback on what the new ROM update will contain. The inclusion of the Message Suite Internet package onto the ROM is a likely candidate, as is a 'sort' facility in the spreadsheet, an outliner and proper thesaurus access within WORD, templates and better import/export, particularly with DATA files.

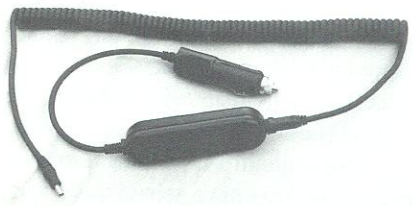
Of course, speculation is a waste of breath until the *real* truth is known, and Psion almost certainly set the feature list in stone a good 3-6 months ago. Let's hope that Psion have seized this opportunity to pull even farther away from

Windows CE 2 on functionality, giving them a little extra breathing space until CE 3 eventually arrives.

The Series 5 has continued to receive plenty of good press (see the news section of this issue), despite the fact that CE 2 is now available. Psion *must not* squander the fact that CE 2 is still very weak—they must press on with all speed to widen the gap even further. This *must* include at least the option of a colour-screened machine within the next six months, and a worthwhile upgrade package in the 1.1 ROM. We know from conversations with readers that many of you are holding off purchasing the Series 5 until the new ROM appears, and if this turns out to be a damp squib then there'll be a lot of disappointed users and lost sales as a result.

In-car power

With the Series 5 being somewhat power-hungry, at least in comparison to the Series 3 range, it makes financial sense to take every opportunity to minimise the time spent running on battery power.



Allgon Lovelock have recently introduced a curly-cord car lighter powered adaptor to run a Series 5 off your car battery—we've tried one of these and it works just fine. Heavy in-car users will soon recoup the £29.95 purchase price in saved battery purchases, especially those who drive with a GPS permanently attached to their Series 5.

See the advertisement on page 110 for details on how to obtain the adaptor.

Screen protectors?

We've now had a chance to try out Widget Software's *WriteRight* screen protector films. They come in packs of 12, which is just as well because we ruined two before finally managing to apply the third successfully. Installation is quite a fiddle, needing a lint-free cloth and plenty of patience as the special film is peeled from the backing paper. Even on the 'successful' installation there were still several small bubbles under the WriteRight.

The product's four claims are that it:

a) Improves handwriting recognition (we didn't notice any difference).

b) Prevents screen scratches (there's no disputing this, though we feared for a different sort of damage to the screen when the time came to forcefully remove the WriteRight).

c) Simulates the feel of writing on paper (it does this by being a lot rougher than the naked touch

screen, though we personally didn't like the change).

d) Reduces glare (it did reduce it, but unfortunately diffused the detail on the screen slightly as well, with overall clarity not significantly improved).

If you're particularly bothered about reflections or if you don't like the out-of-the-box feel of the Series 5 touch-screen, the WriteRight is worth considering. Personally, we were quite relieved when the film was removed.

The WriteRight screen protectors are available from Widget Software Ltd (tel: 01438 815444) at £19.95 (inc. VAT).

Reliability?

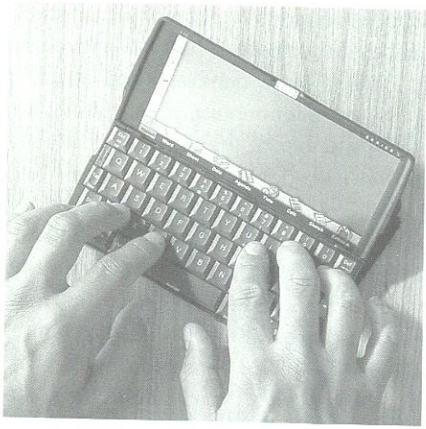
It seems that we spoke slightly too soon about the apparent reliability of recent Series 5s—the sub-editorial machine's backlight died this week. Having just gone through the 'return-to-Psion' procedure, it's worth documenting it briefly as several things have changed in the last year. Note that if you can afford the time, it's still preferable to phone Psion and make an appointment for a fix-while-you-wait. Most of us, however, will end up doing things the hard way.

Firstly, remember to backup your machine and then take out your CompactFlash and all batteries. Remove the pen as well, in case Psion lose it (and you never know, they may even 'replace' it, giving you a spare). Secondly, pack up your Series 5 in bubble-wrap (not the original packaging, which is too bulky for Psion to handle in large numbers) and attach a covering letter quoting your address, the serial number of the unit (make a copy of the letter for your own records) and details of the fault(s)—note that you don't need to contact Psion in advance before returning the machine. Thirdly, send it by Registered Post to the new repair address: Psion UK Repair Centre, Unit 6, Derby Rd, Greenford, UB6 8UJ. If all goes well, you should have the repaired Psion back within a few weeks.

Assuming that you're not lucky enough to have a spare machine to fall back on, there are several stop-gap alternatives you can try in an attempt to stay sane while your 'brain' is repaired. If you're a member of EPOC World, you could run up the Series 5 emulator on your PC, using your backed up files. It's not a perfect copy of the real machine, but it's close enough for most purposes. Assuming that you have a PC loaded with PsiWin 2.1 or later, you can also convert any critical files to their relevant PC formats and use that software instead. And if you're *really* desperate, try buying your partner a '5', but claim that *you* need it for the first 2 weeks as you've got to 'test it and install lots of software' for him/her!

Fast typing

Finally, the issue of typing speeds on the '5' came up recently, so we thought a quick benchmark or two were in order,



Is the keyboard mightier than the pen?

comparing it against a PC, Geofox and Series 3c. While we were at it, we also entered the same test sentences with the pen on the Series 5 using both the commercial *Allegro* and the freeware *NightKeys*, just for interest sake. Here are the average results of our rough-and-ready testing:

PC - 69 words per minute (wpm)

Series 5 - 53 wpm

Series 3c - 39 wpm

GeoFox One - 38 wpm

NightKeys - 13 wpm

Allegro - 11 wpm

I think we surprised ourselves by being able to type so fast on the Series 5, and it certainly emphasised what a high quality keyboard the '5' really has. We were also taken aback by the fact that the Series 3c performed similarly to the Geofox, though years of familiarity with this machine have no doubt led to a

degree of dexterity on the small keys.

The battle between the touch-screen programs was pretty even. Both Allegro and NightKeys are slowed down significantly by the extra pen strokes needed to enter shifted characters and punctuation. Allegro is quite a bit slicker, but that's balanced by the fact that NightKeys is free.

Admittedly we are both quite fast typists, but the figures above do show the gulf between text entry via a keyboard and the same entered via a stylus. Keyboard-less PDAs are only ever going to be practical where data entry needs are quite minimal.

Computers can of course be made proportionally smaller if they have no keyboard, but until such time that accurate voice recognition systems become feasible on a palmtop machine, it looks like the ancient QWERTY keyboard, a layout originally designed to *slow down* typists (to prevent the keys on their manual typewriters from jamming), will be with us for a little while longer.

Real world OBJECTS (part 1)

A beginners' guide to embedding on the Series 5

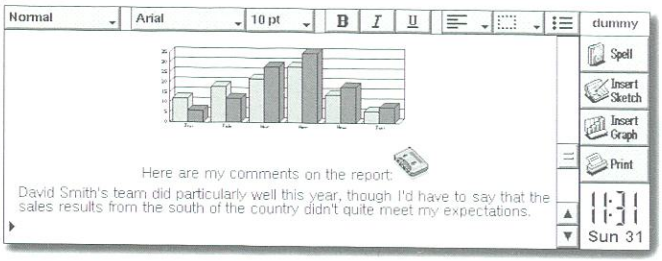
by Mark Moody

One of the main criticisms levelled at the Series 3 range over the years has been that its applications were almost entirely text-based. To be fair to Psion, this was because early Series 3 machines just didn't have the memory capacity to handle graphical information in any quantity. As time went on, third party programs made slight inroads on the deficiency. Psion's Fax software allowed the embedding of a logo in a fax and dedicated graphics applications such as *Draw*, *DrawIt*, *PicPoc* and so on gave at least some hope to those trying to enhance their printed output.

The appearance of the totally-rewritten EPOC/32 system in the Series 5 brought with it not only graphics printing but something much more profound: objects. An 'object' is an instance of one document stored completely ('embedded') within another, e.g. a sound clip inside an AGENDA entry or a doodled map inside a DATA or WORD document.

It's important to realise that the information inside the object only exists in its parent document. In other words, it doesn't live as a separate entity anywhere else in your Series 5 filing system. In fact, the only way to get information out of an embedded object is to cut and paste it as an object somewhere else or to open it up and copy the contents to a 'real' document using the clipboard.

Objects are extremely useful when associating information of different types. On page 39 of this issue, Steve Litchfield has covered several object types embedded in DATA, a good example of how objects can help out in practice.



Objects helping to enhance their parent document

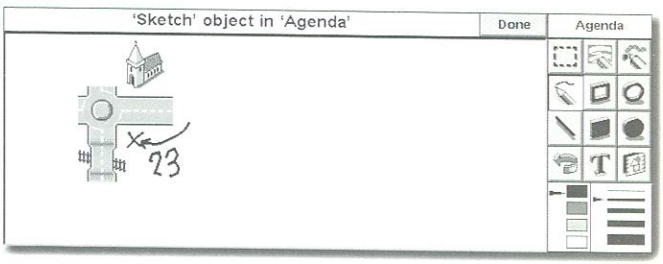
Psion have defined, in their wisdom, four types of objects. SKETCH, WORD, RECORD and SHEET, and each of these can be inserted into either WORD, DATA or AGENDA. It's a pity that the object technology wasn't extended further to include DATA objects or to let SHEET receive objects, but the existing options are still very powerful.

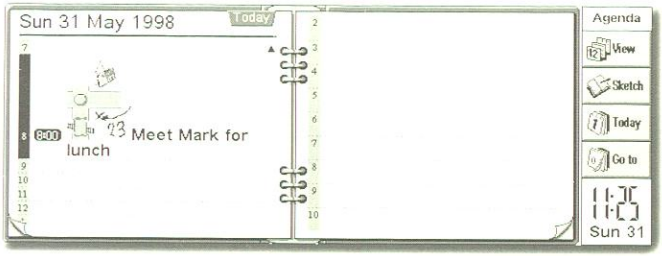
You'll have already spotted the 'Insert' menu options in WORD, the 'Object' button in DATA's editing screen and the 'Edit object' command in AGENDA. Psion have given you a further prod by including no less than two object short-cuts in WORD's toolbar and an extra one in AGENDA, so there really is no excuse not to at least experiment. In addition to their content, SHEET and SKETCH objects can also be 'formatted', i.e. their appearance from within the parent document can be changed. Let's look at a few examples, as the method of formatting them varies according to the object and parent document type.

Start with AGENDA

Most of us turn to AGENDA a dozen times a day. One of the most impressive demonstrations of objects is to quickly embed a SKETCH inside an entry. If you move the cursor to an unused time slot and tap on 'Insert Sketch' on the toolbar, you'll find yourself in SKETCH, but with an extra bar along the top of the screen. A 'Done' button at the end of the bar is of course the route you'll take when you want to close the object and return to AGENDA. Draw a little map (perhaps using the clipart), just as I've done in the screen shot, and tap 'Done' when you're happy with it.

Creating a map in a SKETCH object inside AGENDA





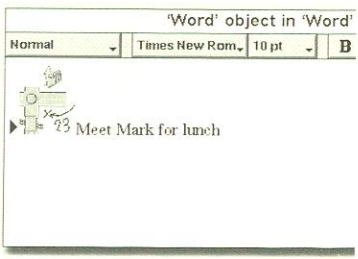
No chance now of getting lost on the way to lunch!

The 'Create new day entry' dialog is what now greets you, and is AGENDA's way of saying that your sketch has to behave just like a normal entry. The cursor will be flashing after a tiny little SKETCH icon and you can of course insert some more text before or after it, e.g. "Meet Mark for lunch". If you tap on 'OK' you'll find that AGENDA displays a half-size version of your map on the main screen. This default scaling down is usually about right, but you can adjust it if you wish with the 'General preferences' command.

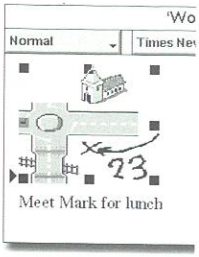
So we've now inserted a SKETCH object into an AGENDA entry. If you tapped on the map you'd see that the Psion put you back in SKETCH to amend it as needed. This principle of tapping an object to open it for editing applies to all types of Series 5 object. Compare what you've just done to embedding a similar map in a WORD document. To save drawing the map again, 'Copy' the AGENDA entry to the clipboard. If you then open up WORD and 'Paste' it in again you'll see the same 50% scaling factor has been applied by default. Unlike AGENDA, though, the layout of a WORD document is a lot more free-form and the object's external appearance can be resized to suit. If you tap on the object you'll see eight little square 'handles' appear, and it's these which you can use to reshape it horizontally or vertically (using the handles on the mid-point of each side) or resize it while preserving the original shape (using the corner handles).

Accurate work

If fiddling with the pen seems too imprecise to you, both the 'Format object' command in WORD and the 'Format' button in DATA allow far greater accuracy, with scalings accurate to a tenth of one percent (or sizes specified in hundredths of an inch) and a 'Cropping' dialog in case you decide that you only want part of your object to show.



Pasting in our SKETCH object into WORD



Resizing as required using the 'handles'

A few restrictions

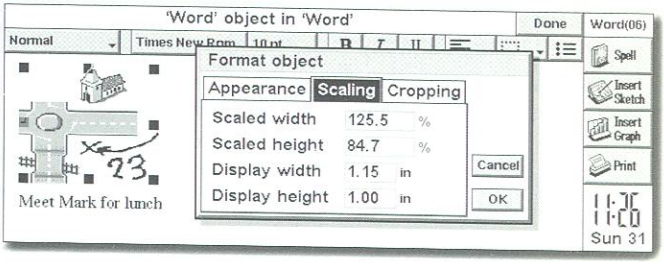
Psion have quite sensibly applied some restrictions to how objects behave and appear. So while you can resize or reshape SKETCH and SHEET objects to your heart's content, WORD and RECORD objects have no external appearance beyond a simple icon to show that there's something there, and that you have to tap on the icons to 'drill down' to the object beneath. You should find that you quickly get used to which type of objects can be inserted where, with their manipulation becoming second nature.

Both the above example and the 'DATA as a CD manager' article on page 39 are obviously very simple applications of this technology. Let me give you just a taster of what's possible once you've got the hang of objects. Imagine you're working on a big project. You've assigned an AGENDA file as the main repository for project to-do items and deadlines. Many of the day entries and to-do items will need attached WORD objects, each containing detailed information on that item. Within each WORD object you may have embedded SHEETs, with tables of prices, part numbers or performance graphs, or SKETCHes of site maps, potential designs, etc. And because each bit of information is embedded in its parent, if you move the latter you automatically move everything within it.

One thing to avoid is to use too many 'levels' of embedding. For example, embedding a WORD object within a WORD object within a WORD object (and so on) is just liable to confuse you, even though the Psion can handle it.

In part 2 of this article, we'll be looking in more detail at using SKETCH and SHEET objects in WORD to do basic desktop publishing on your Series 5 or GeoFox One.

For the perfectionist in all of us...



How to connect your Psion to the Internet

The second part of a beginners' guide to setting up your Series 3a/3c or Series 5 for email and World Wide Web access

by Pete Sipple

In the last issue, we looked at the basic principles and the three things you'll need to get on-line: the software to allow your Psion to 'talk' to the Internet, a modem to connect you to the telephone network, and an account with an Internet Service Provider. In part two, we'll look at making the physical connection from palmtop to phone socket, and getting Psion's software installed and working.

More on modems

As we explained in the last issue, your modem is the vital box that sits between your Psion and the Internet. One end plugs into the port on your Psion and the other plugs into your telephone line. There are a few pitfalls to point out.

The Travel Modem

If you've got yourself one of Psion's Travel Modems (highly recommended for beginners), then things should be plain sailing. Out of the box, you need to plug in two AA batteries and you'll be

in business. As a long-time user of this modem there are two things worthy of note. Firstly, double-check when installing the batteries. The spring contacts that connect to the batteries may mislead you into connecting them round the wrong way. Secondly, when running on batteries, there is no 'low power' indication. This has caught me out a few times. When the batteries become low, you start getting unreliable connections, and as there's no 'connected' light, it's impossible to know that you're not 'on' and it's time for two new batteries. Bear that in mind before you start blaming your software or telephone line if you have problems getting connected. If you have a Travel Modem, you won't need to worry about the next two sections, move straight on to 'Connecting to the telephone line'.

Further Reading: *Psion Travel Modem review in issue 10, page 22.*

The Null Modem Adaptor

This low-cost little box of tricks has caught out more than a few potential surfers. If you own a desktop PC you can just plug your modem straight into the back of your computer—no null modem adaptor. So why do you need one for your Psion? Basically, with a computer and a modem, one has to be designated as the 'sender' and one as the 'receiver'—your PC sends and your modem receives. When Psion developed their connection to other computers, they wired the 3link/PsiWin cable so that the Psion acts as a 'receiver'. This was done so that larger computers can still be classed as a 'sender'. If you plug a modem into your Psion, you end up with a 'receiver' talking to a 'receiver'. This is an over-simplification, but essentially a null modem adaptor invisibly swaps over the important wires, allowing the two machines to 'talk' correctly.

Many computer and electronics shops sell null modem adaptors, but another potential pitfall is that not all of them work in quite the same way—some don't swap all the wires needed. Your best bet is to look for Psion's own product (in the UK, call 0990 143050, in the USA call 978 371 0310), or the modem adaptor from Widget Software (£9.95 in the UK. Call 01438-818818).

Further Reading: *Widget modem adapter review in issue 12, page 18.*

A typical null modem adaptor

TRAVEL MODEM
14,400 bps fax & data

A PORTABLE

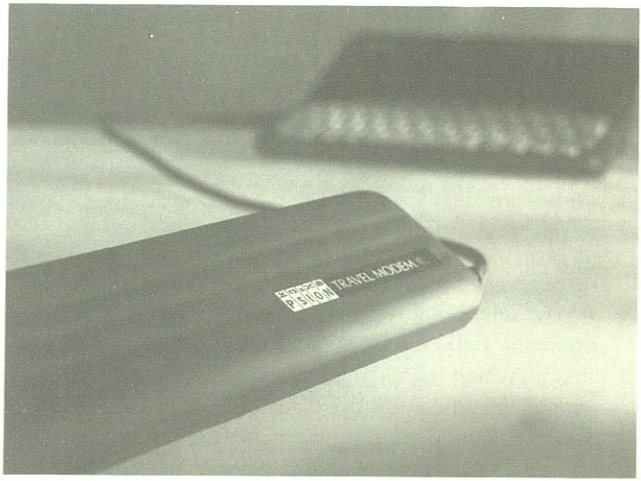
FAX & DATA MODEM

TO CONNECT TO A

PSION PALMTOP

For use with
SERIES 3a

(SOFTWARE NOT INCLUDED)



Connecting to your modem

Your PsiWin/3link lead has a Psion connector at one end and a 9-pin female serial connector at the other. Most modems have a 25-pin female connector on the back. As it causes confusion, let me just say that a female connector is one with holes, and a male has pins which fit *into* the holes. No sniggering please, it had to be said! If you don't understand why the connectors were named in that way then you're reading the wrong kind of publication.

If you've got the right kind of modem adaptor, then everything should plug together perfectly. If you've got a more obscure combination of cables and connectors then you may need yet another item such as a 9-25 adaptor, or maybe a 25-pin male-to-male 'gender changer', which can be obtained from computer or electrical retailers.

Connecting to the telephone line

This is the easy bit. Unless you've got very old phone wiring in your home it should be possible to unplug your phone at the wall socket. In the event that you have difficulty, here are some points worth considering:

- If you obtained your modem from a different country, the connector may not fit your telephone socket and

you will need to look for an adaptor. Changing the cable from your modem to the phone socket may not be the answer, as some modems have non-standard cables (notably the older US Robotics ones).

- You may wish to consider a socket doubler, which will allow your telephone handset and your modem to share the same telephone point. These are available from telecommunications shops, computer shops and electrical retailers.

- If your telephone company supplies you with 'Call Waiting', note that the 'beep' which announces a second incoming call can disrupt data being sent over a modem. You may want to disable your call waiting when you're planning to be on-line for a while. In the UK, #43# turns it off, and *43# turns it back on again. These codes may vary depending on your service provider.

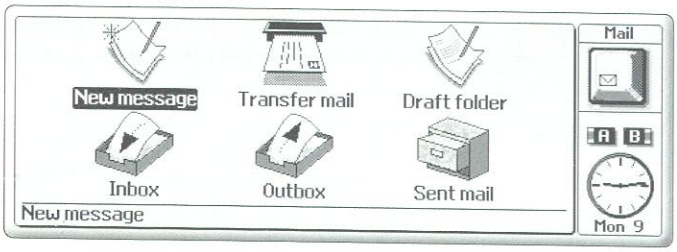
Installing the software

Now that we've got the physical connections sorted out, we need to look at the communications software.

Series 3a/3c

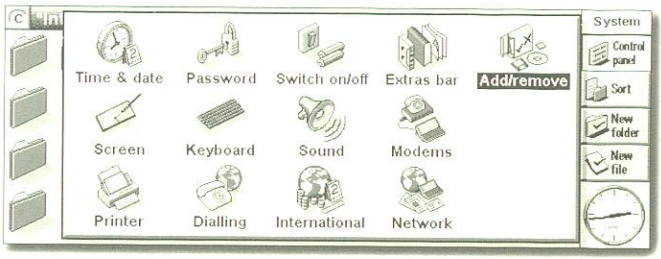
If you haven't got it already, you'll need PsiMail Internet. Issue 10 of *Palmtop* contained a full review of this package, which you may like to refer to for full details about what it can do.

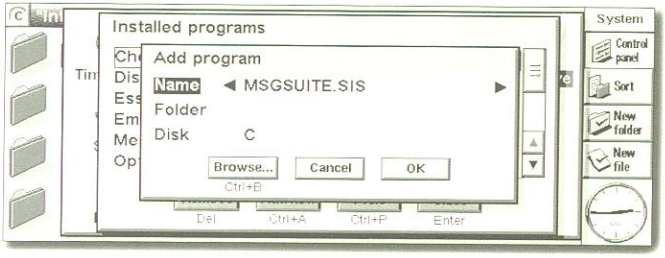
The program takes up around 520K of your precious RAM when stored, and at least an extra 200K when running. If you're making heavy use of the package you'll find that the more free memory you have, the better. If you need to, clear out unnecessary files to make space for PsiMail Internet, and then install it. You'll need to connect your Psion to a PC, insert the floppy disk into your disk drive and run the file PSISETUP.EXE, which you'll find on the disk. This program runs under Windows 3.1/Windows 95 and copies the files over to your Psion. If you don't have a Windows PC, then there's no automatic process. You'll need to copy all of the files over to your Psion one-by-one. This isn't a quick or easy process. There's a file on the floppy called INTERNET.CTL, which lists where the files should go.



PsiMail Internet for the Series 3a/3c

Installing Message Suite directly onto your Series 5 without a PC





Ready to install...

You'll need to create directories for \NET\ , \APP\MAIL\ , \APP\WEB\, plus a few others and then copy the files over. If you're not *au fait* with how to do this then your best bet is to borrow some time on a friend's PC—it's a lot easier!

Once installed, you'll need to set up the 'Internet group' on your system screen. To do this, go to your main system screen, press <Psion><I> and select 'Internet.grp'. You should now have an icon with four options beneath it.

Further Reading: *PsiMail Internet review in issue 10, page 16. Getting Online with PsiMail Internet in issue 12, page 33.*

Series 5

Psion's excellent 'Message Suite' is what you need if you want to connect your '5' to the outside world. As well as email and web surfing, you also get the software to send and receive faxes. Full details can be found in issue 15.

You will need around 1.6MB of disk space to install Message Suite, and about 1.2MB of free memory to run either the Email or Web program and connect to the Internet. Psion don't recommend installing the software onto the Internal disk of a 4Mb Series 5, instead suggesting that you use a CompactFlash disk to store the software. Assuming you have a copy of Message Suite (either downloaded from Psion by a friend and copied to your desktop computer, or from the *Palmtop* CD), you

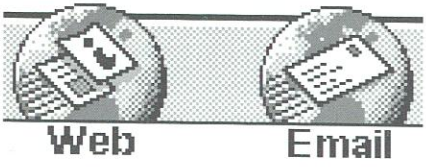
should now run the installation program to get the files copied to your Series 5.

Psion assume that you have a PC running Windows 95 and an installed copy of PsiWin 2. If this is what you have, then it's a case of double-clicking the SETUP.EXE file and watching whilst 'EPOC Install' copies the files to the correct location. You may also need to copy over either the UK or US Service Provider templates. More on what to do with these templates later.

If you have a different type of computer, or don't run Windows 95, then there is an alternative. You could copy the files INSTEXE.EXE, MSGSUITE.SIS and either UK-ISP.SIS or US-ISP.SIS onto your Psion. You should now highlight the INSTEXE.EXE file and double-tap it. This will add an 'Add/remove' icon to your Series 5's Control Panel.

Now go to your Control Panel (via the System button) and tap on this new option. Press the 'Add new' button, and select the MSGSUITE.SIS file that you have just copied over.

You may also need to install one of the other SIS files mentioned above (the UK or US Service Provider templates).



Assuming that everything has gone well, tap on your Extras button and you should see two new installed programs.

Further Reading: *Message Suite Review in issue 15, page 18.*

In the next issue we'll look at setting up your software, selecting your Internet Service Provider and making that first successful connection.

The FOX's Den

More news for owners of the first Psion-compatible computer, the Geofox One

by Steve Clack

After living with a Geofox One for six months now, it's time for a little reflection.

What the press say...

Half a year into its lifetime, the majority of mainstream computer magazines have given the 'Fox a warm, if not always exemplary, reception. They all *love* the screen, most are happy with the size and general layout, and the built-in PC-card slot is usually well received. The machine has uniformly been praised as excellent value for money, and even received a 'Best Buy' award in April's PC Direct magazine.

Negative points have generally focussed on the positioning and size of some of the keys and the lack of pen input. After extensive use myself I'd have to agree that the numeric pad is too small, the five buttons below the glidepoint are too fiddly and too close to the main number keys, with the position of the 'System' and 'Menu' buttons being particularly irksome, given that they need to be accessed so frequently during normal use. The folks at Geofox have been refreshingly candid about the machine's weaker points, so let's hope we can expect some major developments in future models.

What's next?

We can be sure that the boffins at Geofox aren't just standing around waiting for the orders to come in, so

what can we expect from the 'Geofox Two' that's almost certainly in development? Firstly, I would expect all future machines to be fitted with more memory as standard—the 4MB Geofox One was never going to be a big success, and I'm sure that 16MB will be an absolute minimum specification for future models, with at least 32MB likely to be the norm. Of course PC cards are cheap enough that even a 4MB model can be usefully expanded, but few people will baulk at the small premium necessary to get a decent amount built into the machine from day one.

Living colour

Screen technology is constantly evolving, and of course a full colour Geofox-sized screen would be a real beauty. The bad news is that battery technology is still the most limiting factor in palmtop computer development, and a colour screen of such a large size is unlikely to be feasible on a pair of AA alkalines, at least for the next year or so.

Keyboard enhancements

Psion sensibly patented the Series 5 keyboard design, perhaps the machine's strongest single feature, and it remains the envy of the industry. Even without any such elaborate mechanisms Geofox could certainly do better with future keyboards. Unlike the Series 5 (which has almost *no* gap), the Geofox One has a lot (relatively speaking) of space between the keys, which could be used to better advantage. Removal of the glidepoint pad would of course clear a huge swathe of space to allow all the main keys to be deeper, and this extra area would help to minimise mis-keying. The removal of the glidepoint may be too drastic a move and may change the character of the machine too much for Geofox to bear. The lack of unwanted reflections on the current Geofox screen is a major selling point against the Series 5, and if they added a touch sensitive layer for pen input then this advantage would be lost.

CF slots?

The addition of a single CompactFlash slot would certainly bring some added flexibility to the Geofox, and I'd like to think that they'll squeeze one into the next model—somewhere.

Changing the size

There is allegedly nothing in Geofox's agreement with Psion to explicitly prevent them from producing a smaller machine to compete directly with the Series 5, so a slimmed-down machine is quite possible. The distinction between palmtop and sub-notebook sized computers seems to be blurring nowadays, with machines such as the Toshiba Libretto falling more into Geofox One territory, in size if not in battery life. So who knows, the next Geofox machine could be even bigger...

Tech-Topics

Getting to grips with DATA files in OPL32 - Part 2

by Leigh Edwards

In this issue I'll conclude this article by describing a complete OPL32 database example to illustrate all (and more) of the techniques discussed in the last issue.

As I explained last time, OPL16 database files are not converted to OPL32 formats by PsiWin, not even with version 2.1. I use JBDATA (freeware from John Boyce) on the 3a/3c to open the OPL database file, export it as a comma delimited text file, transfer the file to a Series 5 and use the 'Import text file' option from the File/More menu in S5 DATA. This will be the starting point for the example code to follow, i.e. it assumes the OPL16 database is now in an S5 DATA file called 'Parts'.

I'll show how to read each record from the Parts DATA file and to write them into an equivalent OPL32 database containing two indexes to provide access to the records in sorted order. Note that the following example code assumes that both `CONST.OPH` and `DBASE.OXH` header files have been 'included' at the start of the program.

Databases, tables and fields

Series 5 DATA files contain just one table with the default name of Table1. As a minimum, we need to know the field types (i.e. columns). Ideally, we should also know the field names, which should follow the naming scheme 'ColA1', 'ColA2', 'ColA3', etc. The 'Parts' file could be opened using:

```
OPEN "Parts SELECT * FROM Table1",a,n$,t$,s,c&,p&
```

Using * to `SELECT` all of the fields from Parts.

The field labels in 'Parts' should conform to the `ColA1 ColA2...` scheme. However,

if the DATA file labels/fields have been edited the labels may differ. If you need the actual field labels and types, the following code will read and display them.

```
PROC GetDataFields%:(Data$)
  LOCAL fc%, ft%, loop%
  LOCAL Datafile$(255), Fname$(40), offs%(6)
  REM Use 255 byte strings for file names
  REM dFILE with less than 255 gives an error
  REM use the PARSE$ function on file names
  Datafile$ = PARSE$(Data$,"C:\" ,offs%())
  fc% = DbGetFieldCount&:(Datafile$,"table1")
  gCLS
  DO
    Loop% = Loop% + 1
    Fname$ = DbGetFieldName$:(Datafile$,"table1",Loop%)
    ft% = DbGetFieldType&:(Datafile$,"table1",Loop%)
    Print "Field No ",Loop%," name ",Fname$, " type ",
    IF ft% = 11
      Print "String"
    ELSEIF ft% = 5
      Print "Long integer"
    ELSEIF ft% = 9
      Print "Floating point"
    ENDIF
  UNTIL Loop% = fc%
  GET
ENDP
```

The DATA application does not support 16-bit integers, only long integers. Any binary fields (type 16, which have names such as ColB1, ColB2), or other OPL32 incompatible types, are automatically ignored.

Databases, the SQL way

```
REM Use a full file spec
Datafile$ = "C:\Documents\Stock Control"
REM make this an EPOC32 Document
SETDOC Datafile$
REM Give the table a name
Partstab$ = "Parts"
REM All the quotes below are needed for SQL
REM to cope with file names with embedded spaces
CREATE """"+Datafile$+"""" + " FIELDSpname(30),ptype(30),size,
cost,pnum TO " + Partstab$,A,n$,t$,s,c&,p&
CLOSE
```

The above code creates the 'Parts' table in the 'Stock Control' database. When creating a new table in a database, or a new index for that matter, the database must

be closed first. Trying to create a new table without closing the database will create an 'Access denied' error. In OPL16, database string fields are assumed to be 255 characters long. OPL32 string fields should be created at a specific size, which is not compulsory, but failing to do so may generate errors when creating indexes—more on this later. If a second table is required in the same database, e.g. to hold order details, we could create it using something like:

```
Orders$ = "Orders"
CREATE """"+Datafile$+"""" + " FIELDS ordnum,pnum,quant,custnum TO
" + Orders$,B,o&,p&,q&,c&
CLOSE
```

You can have multiple tables open in a database—you can even have multiple 'views' open on the same table—see the `WHERE` statement later.

Indexes sort you out

Now it's time to create two different indexes for ordered record retrieval from the 'Parts' table. Indexes can use a single field as the key, or combine several fields to form a complex key to further order the retrieved records by a secondary field. Indexes provide major speed improvements when opening a table or table view. But, you must create a separate index for every sort order you need to use on a table.

```
PROC BuildPartsIndexes:
  LOCAL key&
  REM Index on part number
  key& = DBNEWKEY&:
  DBMAKEUNIQUE:(key&)
  DBSETCOMPARISON:(key&,KDbCompareNormal&)
  DBADDFIELD:(key&,"pnum",KDbAscending&)
  DBCREATEINDEX:("Indexone",key&,Datafile$,Partstab$)
  DBDELETEKEY:(key&)

  REM Index on part name & part type
  key& = DBNEWKEY&:
  DBSETCOMPARISON:(key&,KDbCompareFolded&)
  REM Must OPEN the table in the same mode
  REM i.e. use FOLDED before the SELECT
  DBADDFIELDTRUNC:(key&,"pname",KDbAscending&,15)
  DBADDFIELDTRUNC:(key&,"ptype",KDbAscending&,15)
  DBCREATEINDEX:("Indextwo",key&,Datafile$,Partstab$)
  DBDELETEKEY:(key&)
ENDP
```

The steps involved are: create a key identifier, optionally to set the index entries as unique, set the comparison type (normal, folded or collated), add each field to be

used in the index key, create the index and delete the key identifier. Note that you may get very misleading errors, such as 'Disk Full', if you do not follow the correct sequence or fail to limit the size of string fields, either at the time the table is CREATEd, or by using DBADDFIELDTRUNC when including string fields in the index. If a string field is the last field in a key, or the first and only field, then its size *must* be truncated to a specified length. Using DBMAKEUNIQUE: with the part number index means all part numbers must be unique. Attempting to add a duplicate part number to the 'Parts' table will, very usefully, generate an error that can be TRAPped out. Note that in the second index above I've limited both fields to 15 characters (from 30) to keep the index size down. Indexes can be created as needed, although they may take a while to build, and then disposed of, e.g.

DBDROPINDEX:("Indextwo",Datafile$,Partstab$)

A couple of very useful, but undocumented, SQL keywords that work well are FOLDED and COLLATED. FOLDED means key comparisons are case-insensitive and COLLATED will ignore accents on letters, etc. However if you use FOLDED or COLLATED in the index you must put FOLDED or COLLATED before SELECT in the corresponding OPEN statement.

OPL parts from DATA parts

So, let's read the records from the 'Parts' DATA application file and put them into the 'Parts' table of the 'Stock Control' database. The Data$ parameter should hold the full file specification for the DATA application file.

```
PROC PartsDBFromData%:(Data$)
  ONERR RECOVER
  REM Use * to SELECT all fields
  OPEN """"+Data$+"""" + " SELECT * FROM table1", A,n$,t$,s,c&,p&
  REM Open Parts table of Stock Control
  OPEN """"+Datafile$+"""" + " SELECT pname,ptype,size,cost,pnum
  FROM " + Partstab$,B,n$,t$,s,c&,p&
  USE B
  BEGINTRANS
  USE A
  FIRST REM start at record 1
  DO
    IF NOT EOF
      USE B
      INSERT REM create a new blank record
      B.n$ = A.n$ REM copy each field over
      B.t& = A.t&
      B.s  = A.s
      B.c& = A.c&
```

```
      B.p& = A.p&
      PUT
      USE A
    ELSE
      BREAK
    ENDIF
    NEXT REM next Data record
  UNTIL 0
  USE A
  CLOSE
  USE B
  COMMITTRANS REM Commit ALL changes
  CLOSE
  RETURN
  RECOVER::  REM an error occurred
  IF INTRANS REM if changes underway
    ROLLBACK REM undo ALL mods
  ENDIF
ENDP
```

For the best possible database update speeds, as well as good error recovery, it is important to use the new OPL32 transaction facilities, i.e. `BEGINTRANS`, `COMMITRANS` and `INTRANS`.

Views and selections

Now the 'Parts' table contains some records, let's look at some retrieval options.

```
REM Get a Part name by part number
PROC GetPartName$:(pn&)
  LOCAL pname$(30)
  OPEN """"+Datafile$+"""" + " SELECT pname,pnum FROM "+ Partstab$
  + " WHERE pnum = " + GEN$(pn&,6),A,n$,p&
  pname$ = A.n$
  CLOSE
  RETURN pname$
ENDP
```

Note the use of `GEN$(pn&,6)` to convert the numeric value of part number to a string, essential for use with SQL select statements. Also, the selected 'view' only includes the part number and part name fields. This may not be the quickest way to get a part name: `DbFind&:(GEN$(pn&,6))` or `DbFindField&:(GEN$(pn&,6) ,start&,num&,flags&)` are probably better, but it neatly illustrates the use of numeric SQL selection criteria.

Finally, here's a demonstration of how to produce a long choice list in a dialog, built from the entries in the 'Parts' table. The user can select a part from the list and the procedure returns the corresponding part number. In particular, note the use of

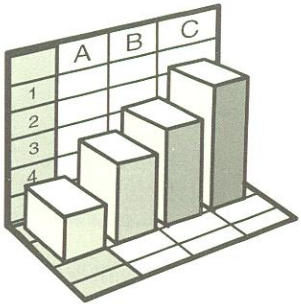
FOLDED and ORDER BY in the SQL select statement.

```
PROC Choosepart&:
  LOCAL key&, choice%, d&, nrecs&
  LOCAL pname$(70)
  OPEN """"+Datafile$+"""" + " FOLDED " + " SELECT pname,ptype,
  pnum FROM " + Partstab$ + "ORDER BY pname,ptype ASC ",A,n$,t$,p&
  nrecs& = COUNT
  IF nrecs& = 0
    PRINT "No parts found"
    RETURN
  ENDIF
  FIRST
  LOCK ON REM tell the system we're busy
  dINIT "Parts Selection, Esc to Quit",KDlgDensePack%
  dTEXT "","Tab for a scrolling list",2
  dTEXT "","L & R arrows to navigate",2
  dTEXT "","Initial letter to jump",2
  WHILE NOT EOF
    pname$ = A.n$ + " " + A.t$ + ",..."
    dCHOICE choice%,"",pname$
    NEXT
  ENDWH
  dCHOICE choice%,"","End of list"
  CLOSE
  REM NOTE the choice% variable returns
  REM the selected item number
  d& = DIALOG
  REM if the "End of list" item
  REM is chosen then 0 is returned
  LOCK OFF
  IF d& = 0 OR choice% = 0 REM if Esc pressed or last in list
    RETURN 0                  REM quit
  ENDIF
  OPEN """"+Datafile$+"""" + " FOLDED " + " SELECT pname,ptype,
  pnum FROM " + Partstab$ + " ORDER BY pname,ptype ASC ",A,n$,t$,p&
  POSITION choice% REM retrieve the chosen record number
  d& = A.p&          REM Get the part number
  CLOSE
  RETURN d&
ENDP
```

Ideally the above routine should have avoided the OPL16 POSITION keyword and used BOOKMARKs from OPL32 instead, but an array of an unspecified size would be required to hold them, i.e. one for each record retrieved.

From the next issue Tech-Topics will be back down to its usual length, with something a little lighter...

Working with SHEET



A series aimed at the relative beginner to the Psion's built-in programs—the seventh and final part of our tutorial designed primarily for 3a/3c/Siena users

by Steve Clack

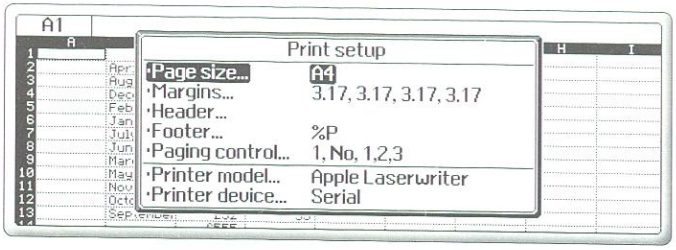
Over the past six instalments of 'Working with SHEET' we've concentrated primarily on the raw basics of spreadsheeting lore. We started by assuming no advance knowledge of this kind of software, and worked from first principles.

If you've been following from the very beginning you should now be quite familiar with how to open and move around a worksheet, enter data, align it, perform simple functions such as totalling a group of numbers, and even produce attractive graphs of your data. In the last issue we touched on a few of the more advanced functions, but we'll continue with a few more general tips, and show you how to print your data...

Printing

Although certain spreadsheet data can be accessed directly from your Psion, without ever resorting to the printed page, there are many occasions when a hard copy of the numbers is vital.

Printing of spreadsheets is always a potentially tricky business, as the data will often refuse to fit neatly onto a single page. Depending upon the printer you are using you may be able to print your page(s) in 'landscape' mode (i.e. with the long edge of the paper running horizontally), using various typefaces and sizes to make your printouts as neat as possible.



Print setup. The vital first stage before attempting to print

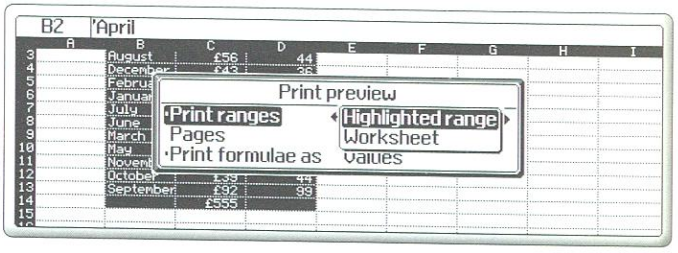
Before attempting to connect to a printer it's important to open up the 'Print setup' dialog from the 'Special' menu, and set the correct printer type, paper size, page margins, etc., just as in WORD. As with WORD you can elect to display information such as the current date or time, filename or page numbers at the top or bottom of each page. Consult SHEET's online help system for details of what characters to insert into the 'Header...' or 'Footer...' fields to achieve this effect.

Once the above parameters are set, enter the 'Print preview' dialog (again from the 'Special' menu) to choose which part of your spreadsheet you wish to print.

All or part?

If you wish to print the whole worksheet then be sure that you *don't* have a range of cells highlighted with the cursor first. The 'Print preview' dialog will then default to printing the whole matrix of cells. Don't worry that you'll waste hundreds of sheets of paper by printing out all the blank cells beyond the extents of your data—printing will automatically stop at the bottom right extremities of your data. If you wish to only print a specific range of cells (perhaps a single block of calculations), then highlight the block *before* selecting the print preview option. This will then bring up the option to print the 'Highlighted range' (see below) instead of the whole sheet.

Other options in the print preview dialog allow you to choose a specific range of pages to print, or to print formulae as the formulae themselves rather than the data within them. This can be handy to keep a reminder of the underlying calculations behind the



Choosing to print only the highlighted range of cells

Displaying a print preview—a miniature representation of your printed page

numbers, as it will force the printout to show that (for instance) cell C14 is actually the sum of cells C2 to C13, rather than simply displaying the calculated result.

Take a look first...

Regardless of whether you highlight a range before invoking the print preview, one further press of the <Enter> key will display a miniature representation of your printed pages on the screen. From here you can get a good idea of how they will print before pressing the <Menu> key to bring up the 'Print' option.

Changing fonts

If the text looks the wrong size, you need to select 'Change styles' from the 'View menu' to adjust one or more of the text styles available from within each spreadsheet. Remember that you are only permitted to define *four* combinations of font (typeface), size, bold and italic attributes, etc. Text styles are applied by highlighting the cells containing the required text, then choosing one of the four options from the 'Font' line of the 'Format' dialog (under the 'View' menu). It's generally best to avoid using different type sizes within the same document, apart from perhaps putting a larger heading at the top of a page, as it tends to give unpredictable results in the printout. It's a good idea to use a bold or italic typeface for totals, subtotals, or any other blocks of data that you wish to visually separate on the page.

Trial and error

Even if you examine the page preview each time before printing, there will still be occasions when your printout doesn't look exactly right. The only option here is often to resort to trial and error—try increasing the point sizes of the text a little, and widen or narrow the cell widths if numbers are inexplicably getting chopped off. Printing spreadsheets on a Series 3a/3c/Siena is not a precise science, and a little patience (and a few wasted sheets of paper) is sometimes required. Some of the problems are due to limitations in the printer drivers, so be prepared to find that certain combinations of page layout and fonts may refuse to work at all.

Once you get a combination of settings that give a neat printed output, just be sure to save the file before closing it. This will ensure that everything works perfectly if ever you want to print out the same spreadsheet again.

Creating a crude but functional 'border'

Where are the lines?

Most spreadsheet programs give the option of whether or not the matrix of horizontal and vertical gridlines you see on screen will actually appear in your printout. SHEET on the Series 3 range doesn't give you the choice, always printing *without* the lines. If you want to add horizontal or vertical lines in order to make the printout easier to read, you can either use an underlined typeface to produce horizontal lines, or type in underline ('_') or hyphen ('-') characters in an empty row of cells. You can produce 'fake' vertical lines by inserting a narrow column of cells between your numbers, and typing <1><7><9> while holding down the 'Control' key. This will insert a vertical bar ('|') character in each cell.

Advanced functions

SHEET has other functions that we haven't discussed in this series. There is a whole pull-down menu dedicated to database functions, which allow you to search and sort your data by various criteria. The feature is quite powerful, but the concepts take a little getting used to. Please consult the manual for more information, and try out the technique on some sample data you have entered to get the hang of how it works.

Table functions are even more challenging for the novice, but allow you to perform 'what-if' calculations by changing numbers within a spreadsheet matrix and watching how they affect the other numbers. Again, see Psion's User Guide for more details.

Finally, remember that SHEET has a huge library of mathematical, statistical, financial and other functions. Browse through the documentation or the online help system to get a better feel for what's included, and follow the instructions for each individual function.

SHEET is an immensely powerful and useful tool, and the more you practice using it the more new applications you will find. Any calculation that you perform on a regular basis is probably best done in a spreadsheet. If you save a useful worksheet on your machine you can always go back to it and use the same basic template with new data. In this way SHEET can save you lots of time and effort.

"On The Net"

The latest gossip from Psion's online community

Pete Sipple, our Internet correspondent, plugs into the 'net once again to see what's being said in the various online forums. This time we find out about a new type of battery, look at scratched screens and the fate of the Siena...

Siena

A couple of users have started rumours that Psion may discontinue their Siena to concentrate on the 5—what's the future for our smallest Psion?

"Last time I visited my Psion distributor, I got a new list of Psion products. I've been a little bit surprised to read that the Siena is not deliverable any more. Are there any hints or rumours whether there's a new small Psion coming up, or is this nice little guy going to die?" *(Rainer.Gratias@sdm.de)*

"It had better not die. This is the only Psion that you can actually fit in your pocket and not look like an idiot. If only they would add email it would be perfect—and maybe get rid of the number pad, widen the screen and add more memory. Maybe they could bring out a Series 5 compatible model?" *(dagmar1@ix.netcom.com)*

"Anyone for a half-size Series 5, half width screen, pen input only, single CF card?" *(cxm@ftel.co.uk)*

Batteries

Always a topic of discussion for Psion users, a new battery is on its way to quench your Psion's thirst for power...

"Duracell announced this week that it is to launch a new range of batteries called 'Duracell Ultra', in AA and AAA sizes. These, it claims, will 'last up to 50% longer in high tech applications'. They will be available in Western Europe and North America in May and 'later in the year' in select (sic) international markets." *(panflet@cix.co.uk)*

"Both Duracell and Energizer will release 'line extensions' such as this. They have long had the capability to make batteries that work better for different types of devices, e.g. high-drain toys vs. low-drain flashlights, but

have instead focused on one single line of products that won't confuse the consumer. Now that they view us as more sophisticated we should get better products." *(scottmag@pobox.com)*

Pen Panic?

Yet another affliction that Series 5 users may be suffering from. Will you get a scratchy screen from too much wand waving?

"I'm afraid to use the plastic wand on the screen because it's a plastic tip rubbing on the screen. I would think that after a long time the screen might get finely scratched, and this might show up as a finely frosted screen. I would think that a cloth tipped wand might keep the screen in better shape than hard plastic. Right now I wrap a bit of napkin at the tip just in case, though the napkin might contain stuff that would be worse, so I'm going to start using some glass cleaning cloth unless someone can relieve my plastic wand tip paranoia. Does anyone that uses the wand extensively on the screen notice any degradation in the screen quality after a period of time?" *(spam@not.net)*

"I wrap a bit of napkin at the tip just in case"

"I've had my S5 for about 6 months now, and used various things on the touch-screen including the stylus, and can see no sign of any scratches anywhere." *(anj@ast.cam.ac.uk)*

"Having played Bomb perhaps slightly excessively (51 seconds on hard, 24x8 grid, BEAT THAT!) I've noticed a grid appearing on the screen that precisely matches the grid of squares on Bomb. I would therefore say that it does require a great deal of repetitive tapping on the same spot to produce noticeable wear." *(desweller@aol.com)*

"There are lots of touch screens around now with plastic styli, and I've yet to hear of any damage from the stylus being plastic. Of course, you can catch a bit of grit under a stylus whatever material it's made from, and the answer to that is to wipe the screen gently about once a day with a soft tissue. Wipe longitudinally from left to right in a couple of sweeps, then once down the right-hand edge and finally gently blow the residue of dust away from the bottom corner. There's a plastic scratch remover (for the stylus, not the screen!) that you can get in the UK from RS and perhaps Maplin (try Radio Shack in the US?) which

comes as an aerosol foam. Squeeze a little into a folded paper napkin and 'twizzle' the tip of the stylus in it in the palm of your hand." *(faz@argonet.co.uk)*

"People may hate me for this, but I peeled the 'Designed for Windows 95' sticker off my PC and stuck it over the EPOC logo. Why? Just so I can distinguish my Series 5 from my wife's!" *(robert@opportunity.org.uk)*

Sticky

Amidst the calls for help, complaints about hardware and rumours of new machines I sometimes stumble across a question that really makes me smile. Seems I was not alone...

"What happens if I remove the EPOC sticker on the top of my S5?" *(sive@lineone.com)*

"I did it, and nothing happened, no sticky glue, nothing." *(kaj.landstrom@wipnet.se)*

"What happens if I remove the EPOC sticker on the top of my S5?"

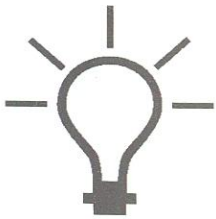
"Well, the effects are very serious. Your S5 will no longer have the distinctive seal of approval from the head of the church of Psiontology. You will also deprive your S5 of a sticker. On the upside, you now have a sticker to place on your refrigerator or other suitable place." *(ke4qqq@mindspring.com)*

"I stuck an 'Intel MMX Pentium Inside' sticker on the front of my 5. You wouldn't believe how many people went 'Pentium—really? Cool!'. Always good for a chuckle!" *(duncan@orioneng.co.uk)*

Psion-related discussions take place in several Usenet newsgroups including comp.sys.psion.misc, as well as the Psion conference on CiX, the Psion area on AOL, and the Psion forum on CompuServe.

Pete Sipple.

Hints & Tips



Every item published in this section wins a FREE _Palmtop_ tee shirt!

Faster AGENDA

When navigating the Series 5 AGENDA application, remember that you don't *have* to keep cycling through all the views with <Ctrl><Q>to get to the one you want. You don't even have to select the view you want with the pen from the toolbar 'View' button.

Just use <Shift><Ctrl><letter>, where <letter> is the first letter of the view you want to go straight to. For example <Shift><Ctrl> <T> switches to the To-Do lists and <Shift><Ctrl><W> goes to the Week view. These quick AGENDA keystrokes can make life an awful lot easier for busy Psioneers.

Dan Riker
Detroit, Michigan, USA

Serial killer

Make a note of your Psion's serial number. Do it *now*, and under no circumstances store it *only* inside the Psion itself. I failed to do this and regretted it when my Series 3a was stolen.

This is a vital piece of information that you'll need if your precious palmtop is ever stolen. If you still have the original paperwork and/or box you may be lucky, but why not jot it down anyway on your noticeboard or in your wallet?

Don Müller
Düsseldorf, GERMANY

Time tracker

It's very easy to automatically track the date you last modified each entry of a Series 5 database. Just add an extra field of type 'Date'. Now every time an entry is changed the date field in that entry is automatically filled in afresh by the operating system.

Brian Boyd
Edinburgh, SCOTLAND

Easy fill-in forms

Having read Steve Litchfield's excellent articles about programming AGENDA etc., to carry out business functions, I have found a way of using the Series 5

AGENDA for keeping booking information.

I skipper a passenger boat on the River Thames, and our main work is private/corporate parties. I need to know all the details for each event—up to three each day. Using AGENDA a standard form can be created as an embedded object (in WORD or SHEET). The blank form is stored in this way so that it can easily be copied and pasted to a new day and then filled in, and if SHEET is used then prices and quotes can be included at the same time.

Jon Dyer
Worthing, West Sussex

Careful with RAM SSDs!

When kept inside your Series 3a or 3c, the battery inside a RAM SSD will generally last for about a year before a low battery warning appears. This is because the SSD draws most of its power from the computer's batteries when inside your machine. When the SSD is removed from your Psion, however, the SSD battery is the only thing keeping your data intact, and even a fresh one will be exhausted within about three months.

Also, don't be tempted to replace your RAM SSD battery without performing a backup first. Although the data *may* remain intact if you can do the change within a matter of seconds, there are no guarantees, and if it *does* lose its data then there's absolutely no way to retrieve it. If you don't have access to your backup system at the moment the 'replace battery' warning appears then don't worry too much—your data will usually remain intact for at least a few weeks, provided that you don't make *any* attempt to remove the SSD from your machine.

Colin Hutchinson
Exmouth, Devon

Multiple AGENDAs

Don't forget that you can have as many separate AGENDA files as you want on your Psion. In most cases this just leads to confusion and it's better to keep everything within one file, but if you have important projects that you really want to keep separate then multiple AGENDAs may be the answer. Also, remember that you can use AGENDA files for any application where date stamping is useful.

For instance you can keep one AGENDA file for your personal journal (long entries can simply be put into an attached memo), or you can use an AGENDA to keep a log of the work you do each day, a maintenance log for your car, or anything that is important enough, or that you just want to avoid cluttering up your normal daily AGENDA.

Using the 'List' view on the Series 3a/3c is a great way of viewing a summary of all the entries, and can be used to format a printed chronological list of

your maintenance log, sports agenda or whatever. On the Series 5 you can get around the lack of a dedicated list view by performing an empty 'Find', and viewing the results, which will contain every entry in that particular AGENDA.

Danny Wright
Sandwich, Kent

Undeleting DATA

In many dialogs, e.g. when entering or editing DATA records, <Control><Z> acts to 'undo' your last action. This is undocumented but is very useful, especially given DATA's annoying habit of highlighting all the information in a field and thus making the deletion of important information far too easy.

Paul Lemart
Oakham, Leicestershire

What's new?

When you need a new WORD document in a hurry on the Series 5 and don't want to load up the last thing you edited, just use <Fn><WORD> (i.e. hold the 'Fn' key down and tap the WORD icon) instead. This will create a new document in your 'default' folder. If you want the new document created in your 'current' folder (i.e. where the system screen is currently displaying), use <Shift<Fn><WORD> instead.

This also works with most of the other built-in applications and can be a major time saver.

Tony Belcher
London

Tidying up after EPOC/32

It's well worth looking in \System\Temp on your Series 5 internal disk or on a CompactFlash every once in a while. All sorts of small files tend to congregate there and can usually be deleted without risk of damage. To be on the safe side, don't touch anything with today's date on it.

Ken Lamorna
Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Taking control of your email

Make sure that you regularly empty out both your email 'In' box and the 'Sent' folder. Both tend to fill up surprisingly quickly, and a clear-out will both save you disk space and speed up backups. It's also worth occasionally double-checking that no unintentional messages have been accidentally saved as 'Draft'—it's very easy to hit the wrong button when saving an outgoing message.

Bill Bales
Farnham, Surrey

Q&A

Psion viruses?

Q Are there any Psion viruses that we should be on the lookout for?

R A Jones
Morecambe, Lancashire

A This is a common question. The answer is that it is not possible to create a 'transmittable' virus in the conventional sense, i.e. one which can be passed to your Psion from 'infected' SSDs or CFs. This is because the Psions are booted from internal ROM, which cannot be modified in any way, as opposed to a hard disk, which can have destructive code 'written' to it.

Although conventional viruses are not possible, it is technically feasible to create a malicious program which could, for instance, erase your memory or corrupt other files when it was run. Having said this, the same is true of almost any computer type, and thankfully no such programs have been discovered to date.

Speller access

Q Is it possible to access the data on the Psion 'Spellchecker and Thesaurus' SSD from within an OPL program? I would like to write a routine which writes sentences, essentially at random, and would like to use the spelling checker software as a database of words. I have looked at a screendump of the data, and it prints as garbage, so presumably is in some compressed form. Any suggestions?

Jonathan Peters
Wokingham, Berkshire

A Accessing the spelling checker and thesaurus is effectively impossible with the Series 3 range. Although they are theoretically accessible via a built-in DYL, this is undocumented—probably to protect licensing restrictions imposed by Microlytics, the authors of the spellchecker data.

On the Series 5, the built-in spelling checker and thesaurus can now be accessed via SPELL.OPX, a new OPX from RMR Software (see page 118 for contact details). This offers full access from OPL.

Questions?

Please send in YOUR technical questions. All published questions will earn the author a FREE *Palmtop* tee shirt!

Murgan's Musings

Stephen Murgan looks at the issues of confidence and paranoia - security on the Psion

The Psion 3a/3c and 5 series of machines are such excellent tools for organising one's lifestyle that it is quite common for information of a personal nature to find its way onto the pocket-sized wonder—that's what it's for! However, there are some issues of security to be considered:

The first—and most frightening—prospect is that of outright loss, whether the loss of the machine itself, or the information contained in it. The solution here is simple—keep backups! This subject has, of course, been covered in detail in previous issues of *Palmtop*, and I won't mention it further here.

A second problem is that of casual perusal and/or theft of confidential information, whether it be creative ideas, work in progress, or your 'little black book' of romantic contacts. Think it can't happen to you? Think again. A few years ago, guitarist Brian May (of Queen fame) lost his Series 3. Obviously not short of a few pennies, he was not as bothered about the loss of the hardware as most of us might have been, but he begged whoever had it to slip out the SSD and send it to him. I have no idea of what the information on the SSD might have been, but it could have been worth millions. On the other hand, it might just have been his address book...

Nothing is *really* safe...

One thing that many people fail to realise is that no security system ever devised is completely bulletproof. With enough time and effort, *any* code can be cracked, any lock picked, any cipher broken. The whole point of security measures are to provide a sufficient level of deterrence to discourage the anticipated level of intrusion. In the case of low-security information a locked door may suffice. In the case of nuclear

warheads one would expect such exotica as passwords, both mechanical and electronic keys, handprints, retinal scans and of course that good old-fashioned standby, the Mk. 1 armed-guard-with-a-big-gun.

The Psion solution

The Psion series of machines were not designed with bulletproof security in mind, but they do have some security safeguards that are effective enough, if used correctly, to deter all but the most determined and professional interloper.

The first stage is the power-on password. If you don't have yours enabled then you are making it easy for anyone with access to your machine to get into your files and mess with them. If you haven't done so already, set up a power-on password—and *don't forget it.* It *is* possible to wipe the password via a hard reset, but that will erase the entire contents of the memory, at which point any concerns about data theft will be moot.

Okay, so your machine is now generally secure, but you still have backups that can be read by anyone with the right equipment (i.e. another Psion or a PC with an emulator). In addition, it may be necessary to allow other people access to your machine but you may want to keep the information in certain files to yourself. If you are a little more concerned with confidentiality, or just plain paranoid, there are some extra hurdles that you can erect to prevent people from accessing your files.

What they can't see...

There's one rather simple but surprisingly effective way to 'Hide' a document so that it does not show up on the main system screen—simply set the 'Hidden' attribute of the file. This will remove the file from the system screen display entirely (you may need to refresh the screen). Anyone with a smattering of technical knowledge will be able to get around this in minutes, but it is enough to stump most neophytes. Be warned that this can cause some problems when backing up the files—it may not be possible to overwrite a 'hidden' backup copy of a file.

Breaking the code

A second method is to password-protect individual documents. The password protection is not very rigorous, and can be broken by a determined hacker—I use the technical definition ('Expert/Guru') rather than the Media definition ('Spotty little nerk who breaks into the Pentagon'). This is good enough to keep out most people, though it is hardly up to the standards that one would require for corporate or government-level secrecy.

Many years ago, when I was working at one of the London banks, there was a considerable stink kicked up by some managers who wanted to be able to store confidential information on the newly-installed network fileserver. However, in order to do this it was necessary to set up 'private' areas on the

network, which was designed for unrestricted corporate-wide access. What was more, they wanted the information to be *completely* secure, even from those tasked with administering and maintaining the system.

I was one of the 'specialists' who was asked for advice. I posed the following question: "If the data is so confidential in nature, why do you want to put it on a network?"

The reply was that they wanted the safety of having it backed up, and the convenience of having it to hand. I then drew their attention to a memo from management that stated that no documents of a personal and/or confidential nature were to be kept on the network. While this was actually intended to stop the rank-and-file from putting copies of their CVs (Resumés, to our transatlantic cousins), it was still pretty specific. I think they thought that such restrictions only applied to 'the little people' and not to such august individuals as themselves—a prime example, I suspect, of "don't do as I do, do as I say".

I proposed two solutions: The first and simplest was that the sensitive data should be kept on floppies in a locked desk drawer, while the second involved the encrypting of that data in some fashion, allowing them to store it on the network while restricting access to the contents of the documents. Neither approach was acceptable to them. My position was simple: If the information was *that* private in nature then it had no business being on a corporate network. I never heard anything more on the subject, presumably they found themselves another 'expert' who would tell them what they wanted to hear...

Man convicted by Psion!

I recently heard a story about a drug dealer who kept information about his contacts on an SSD on a Psion (hey, he had to use something, and with all that money I am sure he could afford the best!) When he was arrested, he managed to erase the file. What he didn't realise was that deleting a file deletes the pointers to the data, and not the data itself. The SSD was confiscated, and the offending file exhumed. It was admitted into court as evidence, and was instrumental in convicting him.

I rest my case, M'lud...

The Psion Reference

If you would like to be considered for inclusion in this ever-expanding directory then please send details directly to *Palmtop*. If your entry is incomplete or incorrect then please update us!

Discussion Groups

UseNet Groups

comp.sys.psion.announce *comp.sys.psion.apps* *comp.sys.psion.marketplace*
comp.sys.psion.misc *comp.sys.psion.programmer* *comp.sys.psion.reviews*
comp.sys.psion.comm

CompuServe Psion discussion	GO PSION
CiX Psion conference	join psion
AOL - Psion Noticeboard	Psion/General noticeboard - Keyword: Psion
Series 5 mailing list	Fill in form on *www.pinkworks.com/pda/s5list.html*

Psion Software

New World Technology Site	*www.nwt.com/shareware*
Usenet Binary Group	*comp.binaries.psion*

CompuServe	GO PSION
CiX	'join psion', then look in '/files' and '/s5_files' file lists
PsionKing	www.psionking.com

Psion FAQ

The Frequently Asked Questions document contains useful information, facts, names, addresses and numbers:

The Series 3 version can be accessed from:	www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/8130/faq.htm
The Series 5 version can be accessed from:	www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/8130/s5part1.htm

World Wide Web sites

Psion PLC	*www.psion.com*
Psion Software	*www.software.psion.com*
Palmtop magazine	*www.palmtop.co.uk*
3-Lib shareware	*3lib.ukonline.co.uk*
3-Lib (USA and non-UK Europe)	*3lib.mobile.be*
Softbase Series 5 information	*www.softbase.co.uk/psion/*
5 Alive!	*5alive.psionking.com*
PsiIDB	*www.psion.co.at/psiidb.phtm*
Palmscape	*www.palmscape.com*
RMR Software	*www.rmrsoft.com*

The Software Directory

Machine key: 3=Series 3, a=Series 3a, c=Series 3c, s=Siena, 5=Series 5/Geofox One

'Issue' denotes which issue(s) of Palmtop contains reviews or material on each product.

Programs priced at £20 or less are almost always shareware, and those above £20 are usually commercial software.

Name	Description	Runs on	Author	Issue	Price
BUSINESS					
Act!	Contact manager	a/c	Psion	4,5	£90
BusCalc	Business calculations (ROAE etc)	a/c	Chris Nicholson		£12
Colleague	Phone contact manager	a/c/s	Ad Bosch		Free
Contact!	Contact Manager	5	Tim Richardson		£20
Contact Edge	Contact Manager	a/c	Ad Bosch	5,10	Free
Contact Log	Contact Logger/Organiser	a/c	Paul Law	14	£12
Decide	Decision analysis utility	a/c	Dave Catlin		£10
Dialler	Call manager and logger	5	Tony Crocker		£8
Facsman	Facilities Management	a/c/s	Gary Bainbridge	11	£15
Invoice Manager	Invoice allocations/HTML construction	5	Marc de Oliveira		£5
Linkwise	Connect to Novell GroupWise	a/c/s	Advansys		A$99.50
Monopoint	Personal productivity analyser	a/c	Kees de Vries		??
Office Log	Office communications logging system	a/c/5	Estuary Technologies		£20
Plan	Project Manager	a/c/s/5	Andy Clarkson	4,14,16,17	£15
Presentation Maker	Slide-show creator	5	Psion	15	£50
ProPoc	Project Manager	a/c	Berthold Daum	7	A$99
Psi-Tact	Contact Manager	a/c/s	Tony Crocker	11,14	up to £15
Relate	Contact Manager	a/c/s	Ad Bosch		Free
RepPoc	Mailing list/Reporting aid	a/c	Berthold Daum		A$59
SaleTrax	Contacts Manager	a/c	Chris Nicholson		£12
VacTrac/VacTrac5	Vacation Planner	a/c	Ronald Queloz		Free/£10
COMMUNICATIONS SOFTWARE					
CixEd	Off-line-reader for CIX	5	SLitchfield/Mark Fleeming		Free
Faxit	Fax sender	a/c	Walter Wright	15	£14
FreeVT	VT100 terminal emulator	a/c	Nils Faerber		Free
JBCIS	Addon to ReadCIS	a/c	CIS PSION forum	9,10	Free
Messaging Suite	Email and web browsing	5	Psion PLC	15	Free
NFSC	VT100 emulator and UNIX-Comms	a/c	R. Koenig		Free
Psion Dialer	Data add-on for travelers	3/a/c/s	Protronics USA		$25
PsiMail Internet	Email and web browsing	a/c	Psion PLC	7,10,13	£60
ReadCIS	Compuserve off-line access package	a/c	CIS PSION forum	1,7	$25/£16
ReadCIX	CIX comms package	a/c	CiX ReadCIX conference	1,2	Free
SIU Fax	Fax receive on S3a	a/c	Exportech	13,15	£34
Swapper	Use multiple Message Suite accounts	5	Richard Stafford		£5
Termit	VT100 terminal emulator	a/c/s	Serge Shestopalov		£15
VT100 emulator	VT100 terminal emulator	a/c	Widget Software		£59

Name	Description	Runs on	Author	Issue	Price
CONVERSION PACKAGES					
Conversion Calculator	Conversion Package	a/c/s/5	Timothy Bentinck	10	£10
Convert	Conversion Package	3/a/c	Paul Synott	10	£8
Convert5(/Pro)	Conversion Package	5	Mayur Shah		£12
Convert 2.1	Conversion Package	a/c	Tom Nemec	10	$10
Convert 2	Conversion Package	a/c	Jon Duff	10	£10
Converti	Conversion Package	5	Guillaume Dupont		Free
Toolkit 1	Conversion, File Manager and utilities	a/c	Purple Software	3,4,10	£40
DATABASE-RELATED					
3Base	Psion-PC database convertor	PC/Win/a/c	Palmtop BV		Free
Compactor	Database compactor	5	Daniel Sissman		Free
DataImp (PBVideo)	Video/Music/Photo etc	a/c	Patrick Bell	6	£15
DataView (/Pro)	Database lister/browser/printer	a/c	Purple Software	2,5	£50?
DataDeLuxe	Database Application	a/c	Pocket & Soul	2	£50
JBData	Database browser/searcher	a/c	John Boyce	2,4,6	Free
Multivue	Business database system	a/c/5	The user group	2	£50
Pages Generator	Corporate database compression	a/c	Mobile Software	5,16	£100
FILE MANAGERS					
3T	Simple File Manager	a/c/s/5	Roger Muggleton	10,12,16	Free
File Manager	Part of Toolkit 1	3/a/c/s	Purple Software	3,4,5,17	£40
Filer	File Manager	a/c	Tom Nemec	8	$30
JBTree	File Manager	a/c/s	John Boyce	4,12,13	Free
Navigator	Win95 Explorer clone, inc. ZIP support	5	Purple Software	17,18	£30
QV5	File browser and viewer	5	Roger Muggleton	16	Free
RShell	File manager	a/c	Konstantin Saliy	12	$25
SnFile/X3Tree	File Manager	s	Richard Wakelin	10	£10
Synchro	Files synchronization	a/c	Jean-Philippe Pasquier		$10
FINANCE PACKAGES					
ABP	Bank account management	5	Malcolm Bryant	16,17	Free
Bank/BankPlus	Accounts Package	3/a/c/s/5	Pete Sipple	4,8,9,11,12	£5 to £8
Banker	Accounts Package	a/c	Pelican Software		£60
BILL 1.O	Calculates Bills	a/c/s	Tom McGaw		£6
DP Bank	Accounts Package	a/c/5	Daniel Pfund	8,10,12,16,17	£10
EasyBank/EasyExpense	Spreadsheet-based accounts suite	a/c/s	Phil Rosengarten		£10
Expense Manager	Expenses manager	5	Palmtop BV	16	£50
Expense Tracker	Expenses manager	a/c	Psion	10	£30
Finance Pack	Accounts Package	a/c	Widget Software	8	£50
Financial Advisor	Mortgage/Pension Calc	3/a/c/s	Gary Perlmutter	12	£7
FinCalc	Assorted financial calculations	5	Greg Love		£10
Financial Calculator	Assorted financial calculations	a/c	Psion	16	£40
Financial Calculator	Assorted financial calculations	5	Palmtop BV	16	£50
HomeBank	Budget management/account prediction	5	Nigel Bamber	17	£10
Interest 1.0	Interest calculator	s	Thomas McGaw		£2
Money	Financial management/reporting system	5	Palmtop BV	17	£50
Porfolio	Investments manager	a/c/5	Guillaume Dupont		$30
Psion Money	Accounts Package	a/c	Psion plc	8	£50
S3ABank/S5Bank/Sna..	Accounts Package	a/c/s/5	Alan Richey	4,8,9,11,13,16,17	$30
S3AExpenses/SnaExp..	Expense Account Tracker	a/c/s	Alan Richey		$15
S3AFuel/SnaFuel/S5F..	Fuel Consumption Monitor	a/c/s/5	Alan Richey		$10
S3AHome/SnaHome/S5Home	Home Inventory	a/c/s/5	Alan Richey		$10

Name	Description	Runs on	Author	Issue	Price
S3AInvest/SnaInvest	Investment tracker	a/c/s	Alan Richey	8	$10
S3APlanner/SnaPlanner	Budget Planner	a/c/s	Alan Richey		$10
Shark A Tax	Tax assessment spreadsheet	a/c/s	Shark A Tax	13	£20
StockIt	Stock Control/Mark-up/down calculator	a/c	Chris Nicholson	17	£20
Xpenses/5Xpense	Expenses manager	a/c/5	Simon Berridge		$10
GENERAL UTILITIES					
Agenda Dump	Agenda reporting tool	a/c	Simon Pooley		Free
Alarm Enhancer	Better alarm control	a/c/s	Alan Clifford		£5
Alerts	Alert manager	a/c	Max Bisschop	13	Free
BackLite Plus	Backlight control and other utilities	5	Jason Kneen	17,18	£10
Battery	Battery status and other functions	5	Daniel Sissman		£5
BusyView	Agenda Monthly View	a/c/s	Lieuwe de Vries	10	$25
CallCalc	Telephone call coster	a/c/5	Mark Avey		$15
Contrast	Screen contrast controller	5	Daniel Sissman		Free
DPSwitch	Task switcher (no need for Button bar)	a/c	Daniel Pfund		Free
Desktop utilities plus	Utility shell and system desktop	5	Paul Law	16	£12
EasyNote	Jotter	5	Paul Law		£10
Encrypt-It	File encryption tool	5	Peter Csutora	16	£7
GBattery	Battery Monitor	a/c	Max Bisschop	6	Free
Geoclock/SolarMap	World Daylight Map	a/c/5	John Davies	15	Free
HotKeys	Task cycler and shortcut package	5	Henry Hirst	15,17,18	£10
Info Centre	Document and Data management control	a/c	Chris Nicholson		£12
JB5Utils	Assorted file searching/management tools	5	John Boyce		Free
JB Active	Application Manager	a/c	John Boyce	11	Free
JB Backup	Backup Utility	a/c	John Boyce		Free
JB Dupes	Eliminates duplicate files	a/c	John Boyce	12	Free
JB Eyecon	Picture browser and viewer	a/c	John Boyce		Free
JB Find	File and file contents locator	a/c	John Boyce		Free
JB Launch	Launchpad (gets round 50 app limit)	a/c	John Boyce	6	Free
JB ResetM	Recover lost memory	a/c	John Boyce	11	Free
JB Sort	Database sorting	a/c	John Boyce		Free
JWIN	Information/utilities/conversions	a/c/s/5	Phil Spencer	10,13,15	£7
KbdMap	Keyboard remapper	3/a/c/s	Konstantin Saliy	8	DM40
LaunchPad	Application launcher	a/c/s	Phil Spencer	13	£5
MemoFind	Agenda Addon	a/c	FTP sites	3,17	Free
MemoPad	Jotter utility	a/c	Tristan Bonsall	12	£6.50
MonthManager	Agenda Addon	5	Mike Jipping/Kabestin		$17
MonthVu	Agenda Addon	a/c/s	Steuart Dewar		$20
NoteIt	Prioritised note-taking system	5	Fabio Mosetti	17	Free
P-Info	Machine information	a/c	Alex Wilbur	14	$10
P-Shell	Command line utilities	a/c	Alex Wilbur		$18
Psi-Sync	Synchronises MS Outlook 97/Agenda	a/c/s	Brian Cadge		$26
PassApps	Agenda/Data password protection	a/c/s	Phil Spencer	8,9	£5
Penpad	Graphical jotter	5	Mat Ripley		£10
PsiZip/S5Zip	Archiving/dearchiving software	a/c/s/5	Serge Shestopalov	12-17	£15
Quick Alarm	Quick activation of predefined alarms	a/c/s	Brendan W. Breede		Free
Quick Note	Jotter	a/c/s	CE Steuart Dewar	5,6,12	$15
RPNCalc	Reverse Polish calculations	5	Derek Johnston		£10
S3A Task/S5 Task	Extended Task Manager	a/c/5	Alan Richey		$15
S3ACalc	Numeric keypad overlay/calculator app	a/c	John Crook	6	£12
S5 Note	Jotter	5	Alan Richey		£7
Shell-3a/5	Command-line shell	a/c/5	Nick Murray		Free

Name	Description	Runs on	Author	Issue	Price
Shortcut Wizard	Emulates Win95 shortcuts	5	Graham Crichton		Free
Siena Plus Pack	Utilities and more	s	Steve Litchfield	13	Free
Sleeper	Backlight controller	c	Mark Esposito	10	$18
StartUp	Document and task manager/launcher	5	Philipp Salvisberg	Free	
Stationery Pad	Templating document manager	5	John McAleely		Free
Stopwatch	Stopwatch	5	Dirk Roennau		Free
Stopwatch	10mS resolution Stopwatch	a/c	Simon Pooley		Free
Stopwatch!	Basic stopwatch	a/c	K McLoughlin		Free
TaskSwitcher	Windows-like task switcher	3/a/c/s	Jean-Phillipe Reynauld		$10
ThesLink	Hotkeyed entry into Thesaurus	5	Henry Hirst	15	Free
TimeMan	Time-related (and other) utilities	a/c	Phil Spencer	8,14	£10
Tone Pad	DTMF dialer/timer	a/c	Simon Pooley		Free
Toolkit 2	System and archiving tools	a/c	Purple Software	10	£40
Unzip	ZIP file decompressor	a/c/s	Jochen Siegenthaler	7,13,14,15	Free
Xapps	Password protection for Data and Agenda a		Mark Esposito		Free
XtraLink	Extras bar alternative	5	Ad Bosch	17	Free
GRAPHICS PACKAGES					
Demarco5	Vector flow charter	5	Andrew Ferry		Free
Draw	Painting package	a/c	S Litchfield/R Andrews	3,8,10,12,16	£12
DrawIt/FloChart/OrgCh	Vector drawing package	a/c	Purple Software	1,3	£40
Icon Draw	Paint icons	a/c	Jon Duff		£10
MBMView	Sketch and MBM picture browser/viewer	5	Lieuwe de Vries	15	$25
P5CAD	Computer Aided Design	5	Andrew Duffield	17	£15
Paint & Compose	Painting and Music composition	a/c	Widget Software	3	£40
Palmtop Picasso	Painting package	a/c	Ken Willan	3	£15
Photo5	Bitmap manipulation package	5	Mat Ripley		$20
PicPoc	Painting package	a/c	Berthold Daum		A$50
S3ADraw/SnaDraw	Icon/Picture Editor	a/c/s	Alan Richey		$15
Slide	Slide-show and demo system	a/c	Steve Litchfield		Free
Survey Master Graphi..	CAD-like drawing creator for surveyors	a/c	Surveying Technology		
Titch	Vector drawing and hyperlink package	a/c	Martin Sturgess		£12
Vector	Vector/CAD drawing	a/c	Nick Matthews	16	£15
HTML-RELATED TOOLS					
HTMLEdit98	Web page editor	5	Russ Spooner		£15
HTMLView	Offline HTML browser	a/c/s	Micro Cheng		$30
Websurf	Offline HTML browser	a/c	Arnaud Weil	7,8	£12
MACRO SOFTWARE					
ExAb	Macro set for expanding common abbr.	a/c/5	Huub Linthorst	12	Free
F11	Document macro aids	a/c	Berthold Daum	12	A$20
KMAC	Macro Software	a/c	FTP sites	14	Free
Macro5 (SwitchTask)	Macro system and task switcher	5	Pascal Nicholas	17,18	Free
MACSYS	Macro Software system	a/c	Tom Dolbilin	3,12,14	Free
Remapper	Silk screen/keyboard remapping software	5	Richard Reeve	18	Free
MISCELLANEOUS APPLICATIONS					
Agenda Comp. 1998	Notable dates addon	a/c/5	On-Board-Info Ltd	11,15	£13
Allegro	Handwriting recognition	5	Purple Software	15,16,18	£50
Calc3a	Scientific calculator and equation solver	a/c	Richard Schmidt	6,10,12	Free
Dart3a	Darts scoring system	a/c	Patrick Wildenborg		£6
Filmcalculator	Cinematographer's tool	a/c/5	Zebra Film		$199

Name	Description	Runs on	Author	Issue	Price
Fit4Life	Health and Fitness	a/c/s	Steve Litchfield	9	Free
Flying Utilities	Pilots calculations	5	Chris Parker		Free
Geni	Family tree browser	a/c/s	Martin N Dunstan	10	£15
GolfCard5	Golf scoring system	5	Mian Gardner		£10
GolfCard	Golf database	a/c/s	M-P(Golf)Systems		£25
Graph3a	Graph plotter	a/c	Gareth Wild	12	£8
Grapher	Function plotter and equation solver	5	Jamie Shotton		£7
KallCost	Phone call timer	3/a/c	Widget Software		£20
Kgene	Genealogy package	a/c	Kevin Groves		Free
Lotto5	Lottery Manager	5	Mian Gardner		£5
Lottery 1.0	Lottery Program	s	Tom McGaw		Free
Lotto3a	Lottery graphical analyser	a/c	Patrick Bell	6	£12
Luach	Jewish Calendar	a/c/s	Aron Landy		£10
Medic AID	Medical package (??)	??	Dave Kendall		??
MedPalm	Medical practice in the palm of yr hand	a/c/5	Publistix		$225
MemoVoc	Voice memo manager	a/c	David Joyce	6,9	£20
M5 Logger	Mileage logger	5	Mark Riley	15	Free
MedMate	Medic's assistant, calculations etc.	a/c	David Henshaw		£15
My Car	Fuel Consumption	a/c/5	Ad Bosch	11	Free
Notepad (Deluxe)	Notepad / project utilities	a/c	Purple Software	5,6,7,10,15	£60
N Store 5	Record keeping/report writing fr teachers	a/c/5	H.S.Software		£50
Personal Wine Mgr.	Organizes wine collection/wine notes	5	Marc de Oliveira		£10
PocDoc	Medical aids for personal use	a/c	Berthold Daum	4	$20
PUR	PowerUp Memos	a/c	Brendan W. Breede		$20
QCD-Read	Quick-CAD graphics file viewer	a/c/s	Kevin Millican		Free
Reader	Text reader	a/c/s	Barry Childress	4,7,8,12,17	$30
RUS	Really Useful Stopwatch	a/c	Kevin Millican	15	£5
Saikan	Japanese character (kanji) dictionary	a/c	Jamie Packer		Free
Shoplist	Shopping List assistant	a/c	Hugh Matthews	8,9	£10
Statistics	Stats and other calculations	5	Peter Csutora		$15
S3A Collect	Book/video collection Manager	a/c/s	Alan Richey		$10
Sound Master	Digital sound effects utilities	a/c/5	Palmtop BV	3,16	£25
TimeVoc	Speaking the time in the night	a/c	David Joyce	14	$15
Topix	Outliner	a/c	Uwe Kallemeyer		??
Ultimate Siena	Lottery and Cheque programs	s	Tom McGaw		Free
VReader5	Compressed Text reader	5	Jean-Luc Damnet		Free
WardRound	Doctor's assistant	a/c	Shane McKee		£15
Weight and Balance	Aviation utility	a/c	Graham Taylor		£15
MUSIC-RELATED APPLICATIONS					
Chord	Guitarist's chordbook	a/c	Graham Brand		£10
Music Box	Tuner/metronome/piano and other tools	a/c	John Neale		£10
Piano	Playable piano, metronome, tuner etc.	5	Steve Litchfield	18	£10
Piano Helper	Tuner/metronome/piano and other tools	a/c	Tim Kerber		$10
'POWER ON' UTILITIES					
Inteliscrn	Backlight and contrast controller	5	Gareth Alldread		Free
JB Jump	Jumps to any given app on power-on	a/c	John Boyce		Free
Pason	Control of password on startup	a/c	Andrew Lord	17	Free
PsiOn	Password utility	a/c/s	Paul Hargreaves		£6
AutoRoute Express	Route planning	a/c	Psion plc	4,5,14	£65
Route Planner (En Rt.)	Route planning for Europe or USA	a/c/5	Palmtop BV	14	various
GeoDis	General mapping	a/c	Rolf Aeschbacher	14	£15

Name	Description	Runs on	Author	Issue	Price
Geographical D-base	UK Road Atlas	a/c	Keith Hollis	14	£34
Globecs3	3D globe of the earth	a/c	Andras Cserhati		Free
GPS AutoRoute	GPS add-on for AutoRoute	a/c	Mike Rudin	14	Free
GPS Mapping	GPS reader	a/c	Simon Taylor		Free
MetroRER	Paris railway routefinder	a/c	Hervé Gouraud	14	FF150
Psi-Mapper/GB	Geographical Information System	a/c/s/5	Steve Litchfield	4,7-10,13,14	£14
Psi-Mapper/Ireland	Geographical Information System	a/c/5	Steve Litchfield	11,14	£9
Psi-Mapper/France	Geographical Information System	a/c	Steve Litchfield	11,14	£14
Psi-Mapper/London	Geographical Information System	a/c/5	Steve Litchfield	4,6,14	£14
Nicholson Lndn Pages	London information	a/c	Mobile Software	9,14	£20
Navigator	Marine navigation system	a/c	Maritek		£90
Odyssey	Pilot's logbook and hours analyser	a/c/5	NavTech		£76
Psigar	GPS utilities	a/c	Jonathan Duff	14	£10
Sierra	Pilot's flight planning system	a/c/5	NavTech		£105
Subway	London Underground routefinder	a/c/s	Tat Tang	10,14	Free
Tube 3a	London Underground routefinder	a/c/s	Simon Webb	6,13,14	£32
W2	World Map	3/a/c/s	John McAleely	11	Free
PROGRAMMERS' TOOLS					
AKA	OPL obfuscator/compactor	a/c/s/DOS	Ferret Inf. Sys.	14	£20
CleanOPL	OPL code tidier	a/c	Marcel Uithoof	10	Free
OPP/OPPDBG	OPL preprocessor and debugger	a/c	Andy Clarkson	10	£10
SafeOPL	RevTran protector	a/c	Richard Smedley	15	Free
S5Event	OPL/32 example framework	5	Alan Richey		Free
SoundMaster	Sound manipulation tool	a/c/5	Palmtop BV	12,16	£40
REFERENCE APPLICATIONS					
AA Hotel Guide	Sort and search list of AA-rated hotels	a/c	Keith Hollis/Fawnbench		£24
AA Wld Tvl Compan.	Travel Information	3/a/c/s/5	On-Board Info Ltd	13	£30
Berlitz Interpreter	Multi language vocabulary aid	a/c	Psion		£35
Berlitz Phrasebook	Multi language phrasebook	a/c/5	Psion	15	£40
Collins Eng-Fr/Eng-Ger	Two-way hypertext language dictionaries	5	Palmtop BV	16	£40
Halliwell's Film /Video	Hypertext, searchable movie guide	5	Palmtop BV		£50
LifeGuide	Bible-based guide to life	3/a/c/s	Steve Litchfield		Free
Periodic	Periodic table of the elements	5	Adam Sissman		£5
PocketBible	Anglicized NIV bible text	a/c/5	Sunrise Software		??
Procyon Light/X	Astronomy/Planetarium	a/c/5	Van Can/Sussenbach	14	Free/£20
Polaris	Astronomy / sky chart	a/c	Achay Doan		$15
Solun	Astronomy suite	3/a/c/s	Dave Rushall		£15
The Bible	King James version text/analysis functions	5	Palmtop BV	16	£40
The Portable Chef	1000s of assorted recipes	5	Palmtop BV	16	£40
Trivia	Trivia and other handy information	5	Steve Litchfield	16,17,18	Free
UK Pocket Directory	'Yellow Pages'-style information	5	Steve Litchfield and Stefan Smith	15,16	£12
Wld. citizen Bus Alm.	World information in hypertext form	a/c	On-Board-Info Ltd	11	£20
TIME-RELATED					
5Time	Time logger	5	Simon Berridge		$20
Log-It!	Time and task logger	a/c	Mark Esposito		$29
TimeBase Integrator	Electronic time capture/project tracking	a/c/s	Total Computer Systems		??
TimeBase6	Time and Task planner	a/c	Widget	11	£50
TimePlan	Time and Task planner	5	Paul Law	15	£10
WorkLog	Time logger	a/c	Richard Schmidt		Free
WorldTime	Multiple world clocks	5	Daniel Sissman	17	Free

An introduction to SHAREWARE

On the pages of *Palmtop*, you'll read a lot about shareware. Shareware represents a goldmine of programs and files, and there is a huge amount of material available for all of the Psion machines from the humble Series 3 Classic to the Series 5 and Geofox One. Most users will have heard of shareware, but not everyone has taken the plunge into the vast archives. In an effort to make Shareware more accessible, here is a quick guide to what's available, and how to get it.

What is shareware?

Written by professional programmers and enthusiasts to meet specific (and sometimes unusual) needs, shareware is sometimes supplied for use on a thirty day trial basis. If you like the software you are then asked to send a payment to the author. Some programs are *freeware* and don't require any payment at all. Each program comes complete with information about how to install and use it, and how to pay for it.

Where do I get it?

- From the new *Palmtop* CD-ROM. This contains almost every item of Psion-related shareware (and freeware) ever produced, and avoids the trouble and expense of downloading from the Internet. See page 107 for further details of how to obtain this.
- Via a modem. This is another good option, as you have access to a range of other services too. With a modem connected to your telephone line you can 'download' software to your desktop computer or direct onto your Psion machine. Where possible, look for a 33K (or higher) modem. If you're new to the Internet, your best bet might be to connect via an Online Service such as *CompuServe*, *AOL* or *CiX* (in the UK) to get a feel for the way we communicate electronically. Many computer magazine cover disks contain the software you need. Connection via an *Internet Service Provider* (ISP) brings a more direct connection, but can be difficult to set up. If you are a novice, UK Online are quite Psion-friendly, and are recommended.
- From the *3-Lib* shareware library. Shareware is supplied on 3.5" PC disc or CD-ROM, or copied direct onto an SSD or CF disk.

How do I use it?

Once you've found the file you want, there are four steps to take:

1. **Obtain the files.** See above.
2. **Decompress the files.** If you're new to computers then you may not be familiar with compression. Psion applications normally have more than one component (e.g. the

program itself, help files and pictures). These are normally compressed into one file, which makes them easier to distribute. Shareware is most commonly compressed in 'Zip' format, and you can recognise these by the '.ZIP' at the end of the filename. Before you can install and run the program, you need to extract these files with an 'unzip' program. These 'Unzippers' are freely available from your shareware supplier. If you use DOS, look for *PKZIP*, Windows users can use *Winzip*, and Mac users should try *ZipIt* or the commercial *Stuffit Deluxe*. You can unzip files on your Psion without using another computer, using either *PsiZip* (Series 3a/3c, Siena and Series 5) or *S5Zip* for the Series 5.

3. **Copy the files.** You'll probably now need to transfer the unzipped files onto your Psion. To do this you'll need some external hardware, such as:

- Serial Lead (Docking cable/*3Link*). Connect your Psion to a desktop machine or a modem.
- Cyclone drive. Connect a 3.5" floppy disc drive to your 3a, 3c or Siena.

Normally, one of the unzipped software files is a text file (e.g. README.TXT), which explains how the program should be installed and where the files need to be copied to on your Psion. Most Series 3/3a/3c and Siena software comes in the form of an 'application' file, and this .OPA or .APP file needs to be placed in an \APP\ directory.

On a Series 5 (or Geofox), the files normally reside in a named folder inside the \SYSTEM\APPS folder. Some of the larger programs come with an installer, and you will find a file, SETUP.EXE, or an SIS file, which can be run from your PC, or choose 'Install new program' if you are using PsiWin 2.1 or later, or choose 'Install' under the 'PsiTools' section or PsiMac or MacConnect. These will connect to your Psion and copy the files into the correct locations automatically.

See 'The Installation Game' under 'Further reading' for a more comprehensive discussion of the above procedures.

4. **Install the application.** From your 3/3a/3c or Siena system screen, select <Psion><I>. If the program was copied correctly, the filename should appear in the list. Select it, press <Enter>, and your program should be installed and ready to run. Series 5 users don't need to do this, as the newly installed program will automatically appear on the Extras bar.

Now that the program is installed, try it out. If the program is not to your liking, you can look around for another product. Most shareware authors have email addresses, are open to suggestions

for improvement, and may appreciate a message on how useful their program is. Remember that if you find the program useful, you should honour any payment requests. Many software authors place 'nag' screens in their programs as a gentle reminder that a payment is due.

Further reading

Cyclone - p14, Issue 7; p34, issue 15

PsiZip — p28, Issue 12

The Installation Game - p43 issue 14 and p53 issue 15

How to connect your Psion to the Internet - p71 issue 16

Obtaining the Palmtop CD-ROM

The *Palmtop* CD-ROM is now given FREE with all new subscriptions and resubscriptions received.

If you wish to obtain the CD before your resubscription is due then you can either resubscribe early, or obtain it from the 3Lib shareware library (see page 113 for details).

Using the Palmtop CD

Windows users who receive the CD should double-click on the file 'Start.htm'. On most PCs the web browser will leap into life and display the CD interface. If nothing happens, or if Windows asks how the file should be displayed, cancel the operation and install Microsoft Internet Explorer 3 from the CD. Both 16 and 32-bit versions can be found in the 'msie' folder. After installation, try double-clicking on 'Start.htm' again.

DOS, Amiga and Archimedes owners will be restricted in what they can view on the CD, but will still be able to browse the 3-Lib library section and copy off the software as needed.

Macintosh users should simply drag the 'start.htm' file onto their web browser, where it will load the interface just as on a PC. Those without a browser can simply load the free copy of Internet Explorer 4 from the 'msie' folder. Please note that the Psion screen saver, demos and emulators are all designed to run on PCs, so they will not work directly on your Mac.

PC users please note that your operating system may set all files retrieved from the CD to 'Read-only'. This shouldn't cause a problem for 99% of applications, but you may have to manually change file properties (use <Control><P> on the Series 5 itself) if you have problems with running or deinstalling software.

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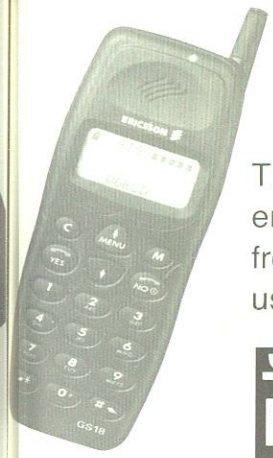

The Ericsson GS18 data phone with built-in modem enables you to send and receive e-mail and faxes from your Series 3, Series 5 or laptop computer using only a single cable

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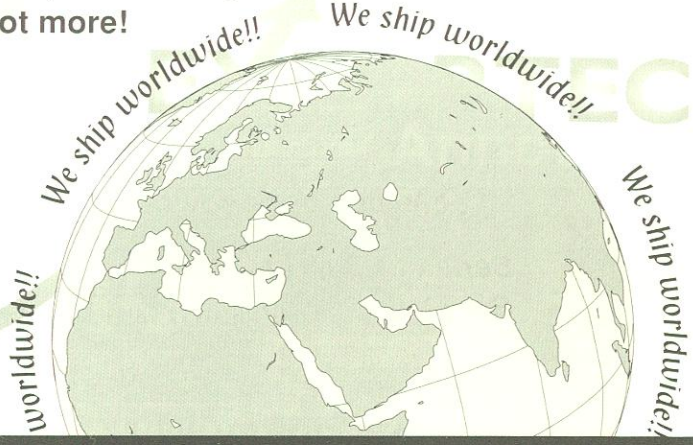

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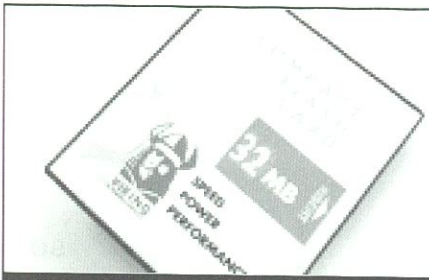

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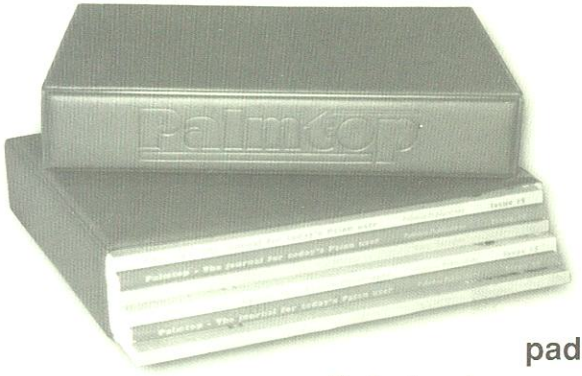

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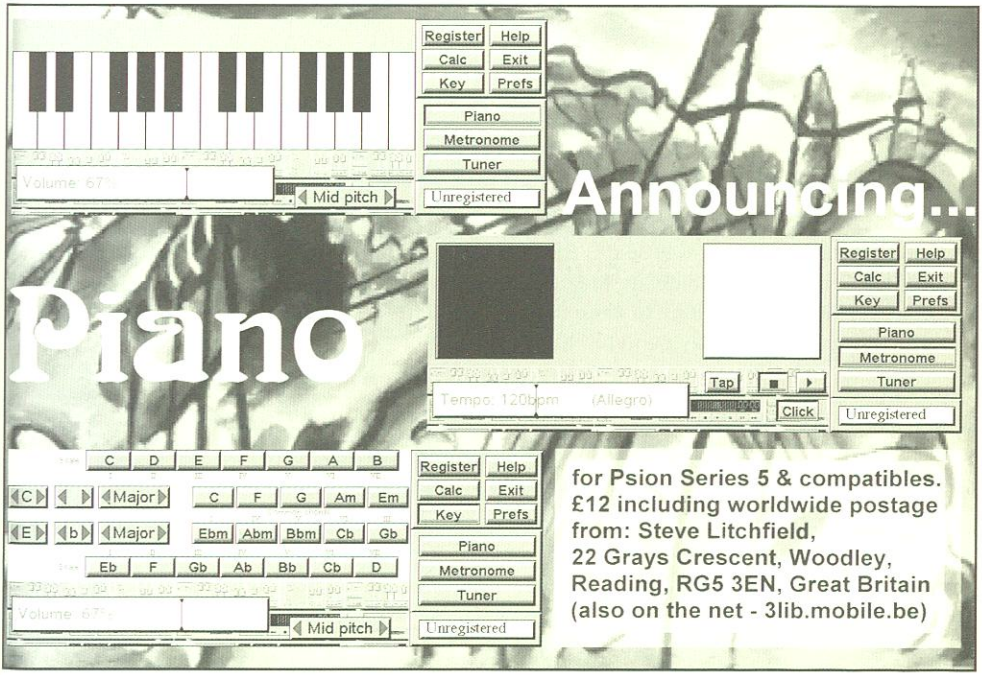

PsionEx

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	backlit/2MB	£100	£200
Series 5	4MB	£150	£275
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	(3a)	£25	£70

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	2MB	£40	£80
	4MB	£60	£140
Ram SSD	512K	£25	£60
	1MB	£50	£115
	2MB	£80	£160

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Autoroute Express	SSD	£10	£30
Backgammon	SSD	£10	£25
Berlitz Interpreter	SSD	£10	£25
Berlitz Phrasebook	SSD	£10	£25
Chess 3a	SSD	£5	£15
Data DeLuxe (v1.0)	SSD	£5	£18
Expense Tracker	disk	£10	£20
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For a fully working version of KallCost 3, plus copies of other programs for the 3a/3c, Siena and Series 5, send 3.5" disk together with a stamped addressed envelope to: Pete Sipple, Top Floor, 17 Devereux Road, Southend-on-Sea SS1 1DR

Available from http://members.aol.com/petesipple/kallcost.htm & usual shareware sources. Email psipple@cix.co.uk for full details

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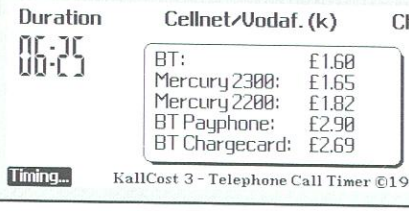

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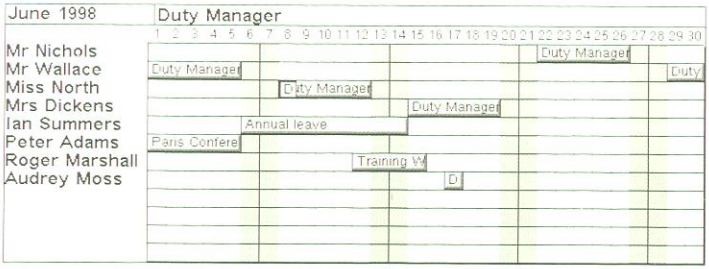

SERIES 5

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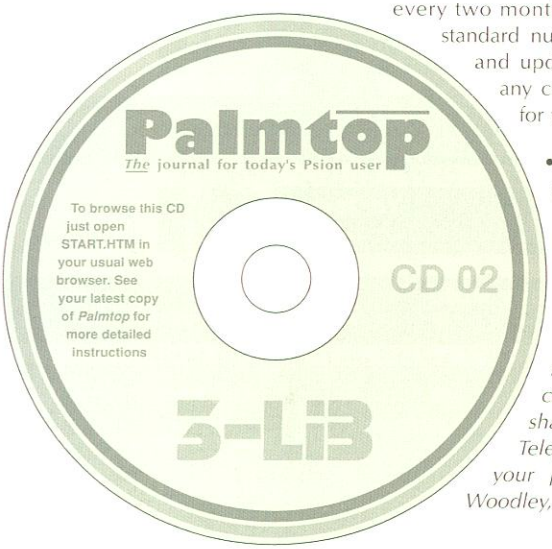
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CD 02
3-Lib

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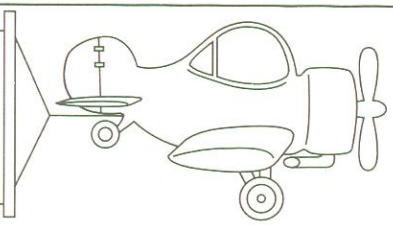

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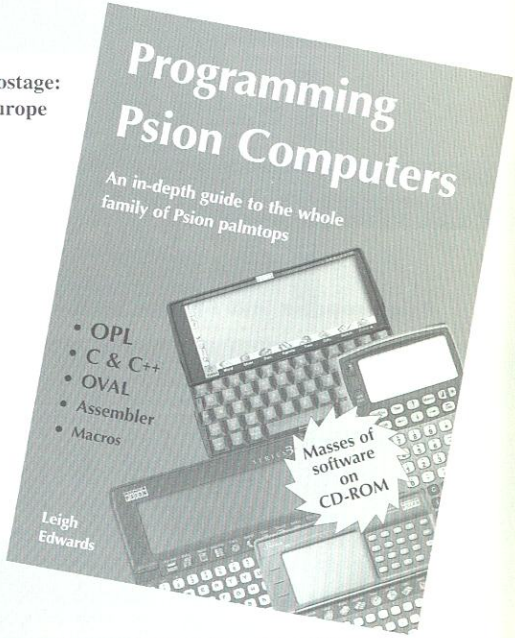

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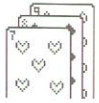

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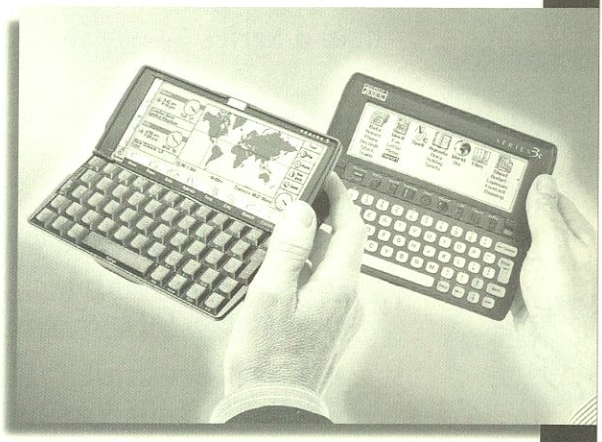

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on

SERIES 3c

SERIES 5

Next issue...

Planned for issue 19:

- Exciting news on some important new Psion hardware (we hope)...
- Maintaining a web site using nothing more than a Series 5—we show you how
- A new regular feature for Series 3a/3c users...
- Working with embedded objects, part 2
- Connecting a 3a/3c/Series 5 to a GPS unit
- Psion at work: the musician
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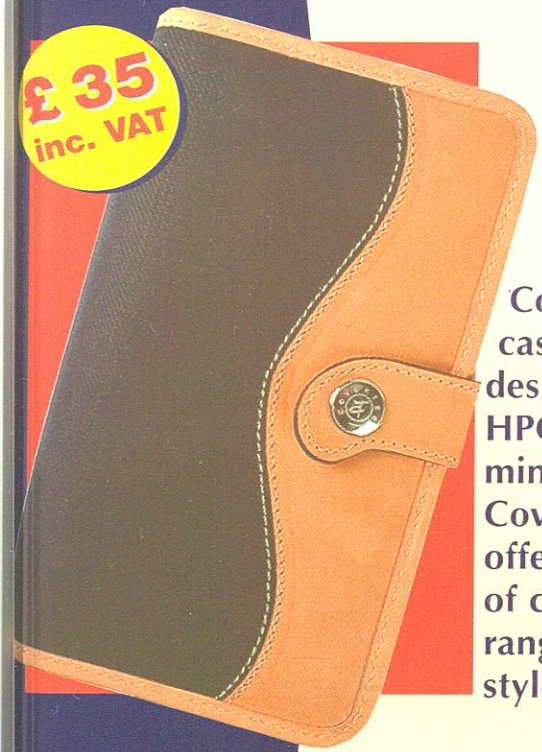

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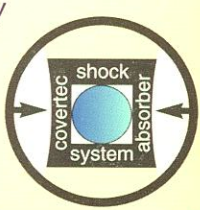

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